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THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS
IN ENGLAND IN THEIR RELATION
TO THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Historical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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**THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS
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**THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN
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Introduction

The Reformation which took place in England in the first part of the sixteenth century was not actually a sudden upheaval. It had its origins and some of its causes in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

We are concerned here with the influence that the political and economic conditions in England had on the English Reformation. Although, the actions in the break with the Roman Church covered a period of only a few years, the causes for those actions lie in the previous growth of England, politically and economically. An action, as far reaching, as the repudiation of the papacy, certainly did not come about over night. Its causes lie much deeper than merely a breach of canon law.

It will be shown that during the fifteenth century, particularly with the accession of the Tudors to the throne of England, there was a definite rise in nationalistic feeling and spirit. England developed along different lines

from the countries on the continent. There had never been an emperor in power over England. Monarchy in England was the type of government to which Englishmen were accustomed. The Tudors established firmly the national monarchy in England. This gave rise to a nationalistic spirit, and to consolidation, all of which brought about a definite conflict with the interests of the papacy.

Economically, England was at that time coming to the fore. It increased in wealth and in influence through its trade and commerce. It will be shown how the break up of feudalism in England was blocked by a medieval and feudalistic type of church government in England. The church was still back in the Middle Ages with its feudalism, while the state was trying to move forward with the advance of economic improvement.

The true character of the English Reformation is best summed up in the words of Innes: "The movement was one in which many factors were at work. Moralists, theologians, politicians, all had their share in it. In its essence, however, the Reformation was a revolt against conventions which had lost the justification of the conditions that had brought them into being, and had become fetters upon intellectual and spiritual progress instead of aids to its advancement."¹

1. A. D. Innes, England Under the Tudors, p. 84.

I. The Rise of Nationalism in England in the 15th and 16th Centuries

War was a common thing for England and its people during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In 1337 the Hundred Years' War began, in which England and France fought innumerable battles. This was a time of expeditions across the channel to conquer French lands. It was a time fraught with uprising in England itself, of discontent over taxation which the kings of England made in order to carry out the war against France, and of brutality which constant warfare brings, especially where there is no centralized power to control these outward bursts of passion. The Hundred Years' War lasted through many campaigns and sapped the strength of England and its feudal kings. In the end, however, France was lost, Normandy was lost, and all that remained from the fighting was Calais. The final struggle of this war was fought in Guienne at the Battle of Castillon.

The Struggle between York and Lancaster

No sooner had the Hundred Years' War come to an unsuccessful close, as far as acquiring land was concerned, than another struggle began, this time within England itself. This is known as the War of the Roses. It was a struggle between two great baronial houses, that of Lancaster and York, each contending for the throne of England.

During the last years of the Hundred Years' War in France Henry VI was on the throne in England. He was rather a weakling of a king. His policy makers were Suffolk and Somerset, and they were losing the war in France. In 1450 already there were grumblings in England against the King for permitting their policies to be carried out. The Duke of York returned from France to head the opposition against Henry VI. Suffolk was killed by insurrectionists, but Henry VI retained Somerset. The Commons backed the Duke of York and wanted to declare him heir to the throne. York also claimed lineage from Edward III. Thus the two sides began to form, thus began a struggle which marks the "beginning of the dynastic as opposed to the constitutional struggle between York and Somerset."² The House of Lancaster had come into control during the fourteenth century under Henry IV and continued to rule through Henry V to this time of Henry VI.

The causes of the War of the Roses are many and varied. Some "can see in the War of the Roses nothing but a great faction fight for power, between two family alliances of over-great baronial houses, led respectively by York and Somerset. Again it has been argued with some plausibility that the whole struggle was the just nemesis for the lawless spirit bred in the nation by forty years of unrighteous warfare in France, that it was inevitable that magnates

2. C. Oman, The History of England (1377-1485), p. 352.

who had become demoralized by a long career of military adventure should finally turn their swords against each other, since the traditions of faith, loyalty and moderation had been forgotten in the all absorbing continental war.³"

Henry VII's Succession to the Throne

Whatever the causes may have been, the results were devastating to the existing order of feudalism and baronial power in England. The great land owners fought each other with the result that there were very few left at the end of the war. Where there were no heirs there land went by escheat to the king. Although he could not hold it, he could see that it was received by the right people. The immediate outcome of the War of the Roses, however, politically, was that in 1485 the Earl of Richmond became King Henry VII of England. The Duke of York was slain early in the war. In 1461 Edward IV became King, but in 1483 Richard III usurped the throne. The Earl of Richmond, however, invaded England from France in 1485. Richard was killed in the Battle of Bosworth, to bring an end to the House of York as the ruling monarchy in England, in favor of the House of Lancaster.

The Problem of Establishing His Right to the Throne

The War of the Roses had removed Henry VII's competi-

3. Ibid., p. 353.

tors for the Crown very rapidly. Richard III had helped Henry's cause along, unknowingly, by assassinating the two princes, heirs to the throne, in the Tower. "The assassination of the princes in the Tower, far from smoothing Richard's thorny path, rendered the world too small to hold both him and the Earl of Richmond; and the War of the Roses culminated in a duel. Neither competitor could be safe, so long as the other lived; the question for both was one of the crown or of death by battle, murder, or attainder..... The Battle of Bosworth settled the issue in Henry's favor, but it was mainly a personal matter. If Henry was to keep the throne, he must create his own credentials."⁴

Nevertheless, Henry would now have to establish himself on the throne and prove his right to be there. The people had not disliked Richard's rule too much, therefore, Henry would have to prove himself.

Henry VII was of a Welsh family. He was a descendant of John of Gaunt through his mother, Margaret Beaufort. The Beauforts had sprung from unlawful union between John of Gaunt and Catherine Swynford, and were declared legitimate by Richard II. However, a clause was later inserted which barred them from the throne of England. It was upon this disputed descent from John of Gaunt that Henry VII attempted to claim legal right to the throne of England. He could not press this legal claim of descent from the House of Lancas-

4. A. Pollard, The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources, Intro. Vol. I, p. 16.

ter, however, lest Parliament change its attitude on the disputed relationship. But Henry VII saw a solution to this problem. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV, uniting the two factions of Lancaster and York. The two parties were united.

The uniting of the two factions, however, was, to say the least, one of Henry's minor problems. He wanted to establish a firm government, an absolute monarchy, a thing which England had not experienced before in its history. He intended to raise the power of the king from that of a powerful baron or feudal lord to an absolute monarch at the head of a centralized government. He, therefore, gathered about him a body guard and a council of men who would be loyal to him and his cause. His real problem was not so much a party matter; it was rather a matter of a frame of mind, or, a change of mind on the part of the people. At this time there was general disrespect for law and order. Men of all classes wanted their will to dominate. "The great political need of the time was the subjection of the over-mighty subject, the restraint of the individual greed and irresponsible power, by the will of the community in the interests of law and order." ⁵ The law was considered by many merely as a means of oppression, and respect for law and order did not increase as the century drew to its end.

5. Ibid., pp. 17 ff.

There were two things in Henry's favor to carry out his policy of centralization and the establishing of a strong monarch. The old nobility was exhausted. They could not fight him. They were not only decimated, but were nearly wiped out. The mass of the population was weary of war and fighting, and, despite its lawlessness, was willing and ready to have an orderly government.⁶ Therefore, Henry wanted a course that was between absolutism and anarchy. "The actual method evolved was the concentration of all control in the hands of the King, accompanied by a politic observance of the law, as the law was then conceived to be, and a very keen attention to the limits of popular endurance."⁷

The Resistance of the Yorkists; Henry's Triumph

The object of Henry VII's policy was to concentrate control in his own hands. He, therefore, wanted to make sure that none of his subjects would be powerful enough to challenge his authority, and raise the standard of revolt. The old nobility was almost wiped out. For the daughters of York Henry chose insignificant husbands who would or could cause little trouble for him. "Henry was well pleased that his subjects should gather sufficient riches to feel a strong interest in the maintenance of order, but not enough to use it to create disorder."⁸ He did not use the

6. A. D. Innes, op. cit., p. 44.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid., p. 47.

9

nobles as his ministers any more than he could help. He rather relied on a small group of councillors, many of whom were churchmen.

Henry VII's reign, however, was not to be begun so peacefully. There were plots and rumors of plots against him. Yet he survived them all and proceeded to establish his throne and carry out his policies of centralization of government. He toured England to show the people that he meant to stay on the throne. He wanted the Yorkist claims to be forgotten and himself to be recognized as king for all time and people.

Perhaps the most conclusive argument to the success of Henry's administration was the feeble indictment which Perkin Warbeck brought when he attempted to take the throne from Henry. Warbeck was a pretender and was backed particularly by Scotland, which had always been an enemy to England. Henry tried matrimony between his daughter Margaret and James IV, but James refused. Warbeck with the aid of the Scots invaded England in 1497. They timed it with the uprisings in Cornwall and Kent, who were rebelling against paying taxes. Henry successfully repulsed both. An ultimatum to Scotland failed to produce Warbeck. The latter, however, went to Ireland to gain another following for the lost cause of the White Rose. Then, once again he tried his luck at hurling Henry from his throne. With six to eight thousand men he invaded southern England, hoping to

find a following among the insurrectionists. Henry's forces drove Warbeck's army back into the sea, with Warbeck taking refuge in an Abbey (of Beaulieu), thus taking advantage of the right of sanctuary, a much abused right, and one which Henry did not recognize. Throwing himself on the mercy of the King, Warbeck gave up, and later was led to the block for his intrigues. Thus Henry VII was beginning to establish his position solidly for himself and for the Tudors to follow him. They had passed some difficult hurdles in turbulent times. But absolute monarchy was well on the way.

The Constitutional Aspects of the Government for Centralization

Parliament and the Growth of the Monarchy

The real power of making laws was in the hands of the crown. Legislation grew out of jurisdiction, beginning as judgments of a court. Even though the laws were enacted in Parliament, yet they were enacted by the Crown. "Many of Henry VII's Acts, indeed, begin 'Prayen the Commons;' but many others, 'The King Remembering,' without the least indication of advice or consent by anyone else." ⁹ Parliament was actually in the hands of the Crown.

In Henry's reign there was yet no such thing as "Lords'

9. A. Pollard, op. cit., p. 32.

of Commons' Journals." We know of merely the "Rolls of Parliament." These "Rolls" were the records of a court, kept by royal clerks. Parliament as such really had no officials of its own. Chancery was the office of Parliament and supplied the machinery that Parliament possessed. There is nothing called the House of Lords, "and it is not till 1544 that we get the earliest reference to a 'House of Lords.'" ¹⁰ The Commons did not have much to say in the Parliament. They appeared in Parliament on rare occasions to hear the chancellor's opening speech, to present the Speaker, or to announce by his mouth the result of their deliberations. "They only appear at the bar, and generally on their knees, and the Speaker alone of the Commons may speak in the Parliament chamber." ¹¹ The Commons had their own house, but they did not have complete freedom. Bills usually were passed by the King through the Speaker and the Lords before they were introduced into the House of Commons.

Henry VII could, therefore, run the Parliament. Constitutional questions involved in his reign were first passed on by his judges before they were introduced into Parliament. His statutes, however, were not much more than enforcement of existing laws. His novel legislations were the Poyning's Laws, the restriction of benefit of clergy and the right of sanctuary, the subjection of municipal law-

10. A. Pollard, op. cit., p. 34.

11. Ibid.

making to the supervision of Chancery and the protection given to the subjects of a de facto king against prosecution for treason. Henry, however, tried to enforce the existing laws by execution.

The fact that Henry VII could run his own parliament and succeed in taking prerogatives which no other king had attempted shows us that the feudal system of government was breaking up. The idea of an absolute king was something new. As yet there had been no definition of the prerogatives of a national king. In the Middle Ages the prerogative of a king referred to him as a feudal lord. He dealt with his subjects and stood in relation to them as tenant to landlord. Formerly the king did not make his sphere of influence extend to all Englishmen. The extent of his power was undetermined. His power over more of his subjects would and could only develop with the elimination of feudal ideas of government. Then, too, there had to be a gradual destruction of medieval "liberties," which kept so much of the country out of the national system, and subjected it to private jurisdiction. Back in 1348 the Commons had petitioned against these feudal liberties which they said destroyed common law and oppressed the people. And now Parliament was transferring these liberties to the crown. "That Parliament should have authority to destroy a single privilege was itself an anti-feudal idea connected with the growth of national sovereignty and of statute law."¹²

12. Ibid., p. 31.

The idea that the Crown should have certain powers was a gradual process. It tended to monopolize liberties through attainder and forfeiture. The king, as we have seen, was first regarded as a great feudal magnate. His power was small and the need for defining what powers he should have grew only with the new monarchy of Henry VII, and with the concentration in his hands the fragments of sovereign power, called liberties, which previously some of the mightier subjects possessed. Laws had gradually come to take their place through guilds, merchant organizations, the Church, Parliament, and City Councils. Richard II had claimed for the national monarch some of the legislative prerogatives possessed by Roman Emperors. Then this conception modified by feudal ideas and customary law became the basis for modern royal prerogative. "It was still in 1485 in a crude, amorphous condition without definite limitations, because men only trouble to limit powers which may conceivably be exercised." ¹³ For example: there were no limits on a monarch's army simply because he never had the money to provide for one.

It is true, then, that Henry VII laid the foundation for an absolute monarchy. He was not bound by scruples or principles in securing the Crown against the Yorkist heirs. He pacified the country and repaired the waste of the civil war. He confiscated the estates of the rebellious and filled

13. Ibid.

the national coffers. He used attainder to ruin English peerage which removed the traitor and disqualified his family from taking any place of power. In short, feudalism was finished off by Henry VII. We might say that he took away the top of the pyramid of feudalism by destroying any semblance of power among his subjects. Royalty married only royalty, with rare exceptions. Parliament could not and did not stop him. "Henry VII, like Ferdinand of Aragon, preferred to govern by means of lawyers and churchmen; they could be rewarded by judgeships and bishoprics, and required no grants from royal estates."¹⁴ When Henry VIII came to the throne he had a clear title and the affections of his people.

Parliament at this time somewhat disgusted some of the people. A common phrase was: "A plague on both your houses."¹⁵ They were after material gain. Therefore, Parliament played only a modest part in the first Tudor's reign. It did, however, prove to be a stumbling block to the crown at times, especially when the king wanted money. The king was forced to give in at times in return for money grants and levying of taxes. Parliament did not mind that the king confiscated church property or the baronial estates, for the more the king got by himself, the less they would be required to give him. But when Henry VII restored to the

14. A. Pollard, Henry VIII, p. 37.

15. Ibid.

Crown all the lands which had belonged to Henry VI and confiscated the property of his vanquished enemies, Parliament put in a clause, just as a check, which stated: "the rents were not to be taken in ensample to the kings of England in time to come."¹⁶ It is well to remember, however, that at this time representative government in Europe was going out. It survived in England, even though the two Henrys did not make much use of their parliaments, except to approve their policies.

In order to keep in mind the importance of the meaning of this growth of the power of the king in relation to the church and later developments under Henry VIII we should understand that at the time of Henry VII we have the turning point of government. This was the time of the development of western civilization. We might say that this is the beginning of modern history. The idea of a medieval monarchy with two heads, pope and king, was fast fading away. They were beginning to be separate polities and independent of each other. The church could not and would not be permitted to stand in the way of these advances of national governments. The struggle between feudalism and monarchy is being won by monarchy. There is a beginning of internal unity. This is the beginning of the growth of royal authority within a nation. The king became the emblem of national

16. H. A. Fisher, The History of England, From the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of Henry VIII, p. 10.

unity, he became the pivot point. Previously parliament had failed and Lancastrian rule had run into anarchy and civil war. Now there was more of a popular demand for a firm hand. Thus must be so, otherwise it is impossible to explain how Henry VII so consolidated the power of his rule, and how Henry VIII ruled as an absolute monarch and was able to do the impossible---break away from the power of Rome. The king is government now, not parliament. Wars had cooled the people's love for liberty and "impaired their faith in parliament. It is a modern myth that Englishmen have always been consumed with enthusiasm for parliamentary government."¹⁷

The Court System; Star Chamber

In order to further show the consolidation of power in the hands of the king we turn to the court system, particularly what is known as the Court of the Star Chamber. This branch of the government was another instrument in the king's hands to hold the barons and officials in check. The king, now, not only had the King's Council in parliament in which also the barons functioned, but also his counsellors formed this "Out of Parliament Council."

The Court of the Star Chamber came about by the Star Chamber Act of 1487, although it had a long history. In 1355 a select body of counsellors sat for judicial business

17. A. Pollard, "Henry VIII", p. 33.

in a room called Star Chamber, so named because of the stars on the ceiling. Henry VI had called offenders before himself or his council for riots, extortions and oppressions. Cases of common law were sent before the judges. An Act of 1453 similar to the one of 1487 could also be considered the foundation of the Star Chamber. Henry's Act merely extended the list of offenses which were to come under its jurisdiction. He gave statutory sanction to the issuing of writs of the Great and Privy Seal, and gave it the power to examine defendants under oath. Later the jurisdiction of the Court was also gradually extended beyond the limits of the Act of 1487 to include cases of forgery, perjury, contempt of proclamation, frauds, duels, and other offences.

The reason that the Star Chamber extended its jurisdiction was because of the break down of the jury system. The status of the court system was rather poor. "Trial by jury might in effect be a contest in perjury, and (that) the conscience of jurors was seldom proof against the pressure of bribery or force that might be brought to bear upon them by their powerful neighbors. It should no doubt, be remembered that the judicial functions now discharged by juries were something new, and that jurors probably still regarded themselves as little more than witnesses, expected to do

18. A. Pollard, "Henry VII", p. 39.

their best for their friends and not to judge impartially
 between the parties to the suit." ¹⁹ One of the functions of
 the Star Chamber, therefore, was to put greater fear into
 the trespassers mind than the local magnates could do. The
 Court of Star Chamber was justified in its existence in
 this that it was able to be independent enough and powerful
 enough not to be in danger of being intimidated and bribed
 by the wealthy. It was able to take up cases with which the
 ordinary courts would have difficulty in dealing. "In ex-
 ercising this function the Council practically came to re-
 solve itself into a judicial committee, meeting in a room
 known as the Star Chamber.....absorbing into its hands of-
 fences in the matter of 'maintenance' and 'livery'.....prac-
 tices which the nobility had indulged in for the magnifica-
 tion of their households, and the provision of a military
 following---and being peculiarly subject to the royal in-
 fluence, it was exceedingly useful to the King in keeping
 the baronage within bounds." ²⁰ Thus Henry VII could carry
 on his policy of centralization as this Court proceeded to
 destroy the feudal aristocracy.

The Problem of Taxation

However, in order to understand that not all was a "bed
 of roses" for the cause of the Red Rose one need only mention
 taxation. The levying of taxes was always one of the causes

19. Ibid., p. 40.

20. A. D. Innes, op.cit., p. 48.

.21

of difficulties for the king. It plagued the Tudors. Parliamentary taxation was unpopular. Therefore, Henry VII had to rely on revenue from land, upon customs and foreign treaties. Not only that. During his reign Henry VII had two expert money men, Empson and Dudley who acquired for the king not a little money for his treasury. They extorted money for him through fines and imprisonments. When Henry VIII came to the throne he tried to right this wrong by permitting those who had suffered from Empson and Dudley to appeal for payment.

The Tudor kings soon came to realize that taxation was an easy way to stir up the masses and incite the anger of parliament. It helped to shape internal and foreign policies. The affect of Henry VIII's and Wolsey's policy of war in Europe in 1522 resulted in increased loans and taxes. When parliament would not give what Wolsey wanted to wage war he proposed and "Amicable Grant" which really amounted to an income tax. An insurrection broke out in Suffolk. There was talk against the king and the cardinal. Wolsey decided to withdraw the fixed ratio and began to make peace in Europe with Francis, and King Henry began to have thoughts of removing his cardinal minister.

Taxes and rumors of taxes were the occasion of most re-

21. A. Pollard, "Henry VII", p. 40: "Queen Elizabeth once admitted to a foreign diplomat that there was plenty of money in England but that it was difficult of extraction."

volts during the Tudor period. The Cornishmen revolted because they refused to be taxed for the fight with Scotland. "The rioters who slew the Earl of Northumberland in 1489, 'denied their taxes to pay.'²² The amount of money, however, which was asked of the people was not a great amount. It was not as great as the cry which was raised against it. Then why such great opposition? Perhaps the answer lies in these three facts: 1. Direct taxation was spasmodic and not an annual affair to which men would grow accustomed. Taxes were voted only about once in every six years. This irregularity caused the people to look upon taxes, not as their duty, but as something with which the king bothered them every so often; 2. There was still a lack of national sentiment among the people. Too many thought in feudal terms, in a local sense, and not in national terms. The Cornishmen are perfect examples of this. They could see no reason why they should have to pay taxes to defend the country against the Scots; and, 3. The manner in which the tax was assessed caused resentment, especially on the part of the wealthier individuals. Henry wanted to reduce the nobility. The taxes were light enough on the towns and cities in general, but heavy on individuals. Henry VII used forced loans and benevolences to raise money. Thus the upper and middle clas-

22. Ibid., p. 75, from "Skelton's Lament" on the Death of the Earl."

ses were also assessed for money.

What does taxation have to do with centralization and the growing power of the monarchy? The fact that the king levied taxes illustrates the progress of the national government. It illustrates the fact that the more powerful the government was, the more funds were required to run it properly. It meant that the people of England would have to give for national protection, for the general growth and prosperity of the country as a whole under one unified government. The uprisings against taxations, however, illustrate the fact that some parts of England were still under feudalism and medieval local liberties. They were indifferent to national growth. But it must be remembered that this indifference was not a general thing throughout England. Otherwise Henry VII would never have succeeded in building the foundation for a centralized government. Henry VIII would not have been so successful if all England would have still been under feudal influence. This again shows the progress of Henry VII's policies. For the Midlands, the South and the East never arose in conspiracy or resentment against Henry VII because of taxation. There, feudalism, was fast fading away and the new national spirit of independence and unity was taking shape.

Foreign Policies Tend to Avoid War and Maintain Peace for Growth

The wars which England had waged on the continent had

never gained them anything permanent, but rather had weakened the nation internally. Henry VII knew his limitations. He knew that to try to renew, for instance, the struggle of regaining France would be costly to England and above all would ruin his chances of establishing firmly his reign. Henry accomplished the objects that he had set before himself and refrained from taking up quests which would have led him into disaster. His foreign policy was cautious and foreign domination and influence was looked upon with disfavor. Henry VII was a "patient and grim diplomatist, lacking the flamboyant spirit of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and he never appealed to the mob, which never applauded; for wisdom is not a popular quality. But none knew his business better, or did his work more completely. His prescription for England's disorders was a sedative toned with iron and administered with unflinching resolution. He confined to the bounds of law and order a liberty that had run riot over the land; and he gave the English State a framework of strength and unity that withstood the disruptive force of ecclesiastical revolution."²⁴

Tudor Insular Policy

Henry VII followed an insular policy. His work was centered in England. He was indifferent to Europe and stayed away from its councils. Most of the countries, he

24. Ibid., p. 70.

felt, were too far away from England for him to be concerned with them. He joined the Holy League as a matter of form.²⁵ Perhaps, his aloofness of foreign entanglements sprang from his early acquaintance of their conditons and their politics before he became the king of England. The aim of his dealings with other countries was for the welfare of his own country. Then, too, he knew that war meant taxation, and taxation was always bad for it meant discontent and friotion. It involved waste and brought about weakness.

Yet, Henry VII was often in a favored position over against the European powers. "He was no believer in peace at any price, on the contrary, he always obtained a very high price for his peace. His subjects paid him to levy war and his enemies bribed him to refrain."²⁶ In general, his game was to play until he had the advantage. He kept his subjects in readiness for war just enough to collect funds and yet not have to spend the money in actual battle.

Let us see how his policies worked out, first, in France.

Relations with France

England was low as a maritime power at this time. It had lost most of its trade, except with Flanders in France, and most of that was carried by foreign vessels. France was fast becoming a nation and England could not think of regaining lost territory there, although the king of England

25. Ibid., p. 52.

26. Ibid.

still held the title as King of France. Brittany became a vassal of France under force. Henry wanted to win it back. He made an alliance with Spain, by marriage, to help him. Duchess Anne of Brittany was forced to sign it over to Henry, but soon lost it when Anne married the King of France in 1491. Henry decided on war against France. In the fall of 1492 he headed an army against France. But there was not much fighting. He quickly signed a peace treaty with Charles VIII of France, who agreed to pay for the expenses which Brittany had incurred when England gave her aid. The peace was signed at Etaples. It was Henry VII's first and last foreign war. He was, by the way, accused of putting on a sham battle in order to collect money from his subjects.²⁷

There were several reasons why Henry did not press the war against France. In the first place, it would begin anew the Hundred Years' War, and he couldn't afford that. Yet, if France gained the upper hand she would move to the coast and dominate the channel shipping and trade and be England's rival on the sea. On the other hand, if Henry won out, England would have complete control over the sea lanes. But one of the main reasons why the so-called war on France lasted only a month was because Ferdinand in Spain failed to live up to his promises. He gave no help to Henry and Henry knew when he could win and when he could

27. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 46.

not. Ferdinand's promise had been worthless. He had wanted Henry to fight France so that he could gain Roussillon and Cerdagne for Spain. After his aims were accomplished he signed a treaty with France in 1493. It is true that Henry might have supported uprisings in Brittany against France, but, he knew the Bretons were not willing for a death struggle against the union with France. But the important thing for us to remember is that in these dealings with France, Henry VII did not come out the loser for England. "Peace had its prerequisites no less than war, and Henry returned from Etaples, if not with honor, at least with substantial profits. Charles VIII---admitted Henry's title to the English throne, and paid him a handsome annuity to refrain from claiming the French."²⁸

Henry VII's peace with France was important because France had always been England's rival and it was important that he have peace with her. France was nearer than any other European power and Henry believed in peace with those about him. When France turned to conquer in Lombardy and Ferdinand to Naples, Henry did not intervene. Rivalry between these two great Catholic powers gave England the chance to come to the front as a nation. It also opened the way for the Reformation in England, for the two great Roman Catholic countries on the continent were not united to stop it or do

28. A. Pollard, "Henry VII", p. 55.

anything about Henry VIII and his break with Rome.

We ought to consider here whether or not the foreign policies of son Henry VIII were not completely opposed to those of his father. Henry VIII began where his father left off. His foreign policy was perhaps more active than his father's, yet he did not commit himself to all out war or foolishly throw away what his father had gained in the growth of England among the nations of Europe. Henry VIII was more powerful. He swung the balance of power in Europe to the advantage of England, both politically and economically. Henry VIII was the first of the English kings to be educated under the new influence of the Renaissance. At first he was headed for an ecclesiastical training, merely and mostly because it was more economical for his father to provide for his education out of ecclesiastical revenues. Henry VIII was a man of ability and with a unique personality. It must be so, for he broke away from Roman power with one blow, and that not with force of arms for he had only a few "pensioners and yeomen of the guard."²⁹

Now by the time that Henry VIII came to the throne in 1509, France seemed lost to England, nevertheless Henry kept his eyes open, and when he had a chance to ally with the Pope and Louis XII and Ferdinand in 1511 against France, he did so. But Henry had yet to learn that Ferdinand was not to be relied upon. The English skirmish under Dorset

29. Ibid., p. 3.

against the French came to naught. In 1513 his navy was defeated in the channel. However, Henry did find some success with an army in Flanders. Henry's object in helping the Pope expel the French from Italy was not without purpose. He wanted the Pope to declare him ruler of France and all the territory he could conquer.³⁰ In 1522 Henry waged another war against France, under the direction of his Cardinal Wolsey, who also had his personal aims of becoming pope. But the lack of money stopped him. Charles I, Emperor, captured Francis I of France, which left the balance of power in Europe with Charles. The policy of Wolsey and of Henry in France was to take what they could get without too much expense. This was a time of power politics, and the survival of the strongest and the most powerful. In 1516 after Charles had become king of Spain and Francis replaced Louis XII, Wolsey saw fit to conclude a treaty between the great powers. War was becoming too expensive. Besides, Wolsey could take the honor of being the peace-maker outside of Rome. Thus London became a diplomatic center, the diplomatic center of Europe. Nor was the Pope excluded from this political entanglement. He made treaties to suit himself and fought when his domains were in danger. Leo X organized a secret league consisting of the Empire, England, and himself, in 1521, against France. But three years later Clement VII made an agreement with Venice in which they agreed

30. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 189.

not to help the enemies of France. In 1525 the pope formed the Holy League with Francis and rebuffed Charles, with the result that the Imperial army sacked Rome.

Relations with Spain

Henry VII was a miser. Money had much to do with his relations with Spain. In his relations with Spain Henry VII reached the high point of his diplomacy. Spain at this time was a first rate power in the world, and Henry meant to consolidate his position with her. Therefore, in 1497, during the time of Warbeck's attempts against the English throne, Henry made negotiations with Spain for the marriage of his son, Arthur, to Catherine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. There were many fruits of these negotiations. Henry received a two hundred thousand ducat dowry from Ferdinand and Isabella, but not until after much bickering on Henry's part did Spain agree. Besides the solemn betrothal, there were two proxy marriages; all this by dispensation of the pope.³¹ It was not only a money advantage for England. Ferdinand smoothed the way for peace between Scotland and England, and, through his influence Louis XII of France hastened to surrender Yorkist sympathizers. The marriage was concluded on Nov. 15, 1501. Thus Henry had the support of Spain's power for the time being. This alliance continued, more or less, for forty years and was shattered when England broke with Rome.

31. Ibid., p. 81.

Six months after the marriage, however, young Arthur died. By this time the alliance had become more necessary for Spain than for England. Spain's help to England had by this time, through various developments, become almost useless. Outwardly Henry seemed to be firmly established and England a power in the world. Now it was Ferdinand and Isabella who began to urge a marriage between Catherine and her brother-in-law, Prince Henry. Negotiations began. Henry demanded that the remainder of the dowry be paid first. This, rather than the proposed scruples of conscience of Henry VII, caused the delay.

Ferdinand and Henry were like-minded men. Both had a keen appreciation of money, and both knew how to strike a bargain. Ferdinand wanted the half of the dowry which had been paid, to be returned to Spain. Henry wanted to collect the other half. It was Ferdinand who then proposed that the young prince and Catherine be betrothed.

When Henry died on April 21, 1509, the young prince became Henry VIII, King of England. On June 3, Catherine and Henry were married, after having once claimed that the betrothal was void because he was not of age at the time it was negotiated. There were no scruples of conscience in Henry in 1509, when he married his sister-in-law by dispensation of the Pope. A few years later he used his marriage as a means of breaking away from the power of the Roman Church.

Relations with Scotland

It has been well said that Scotland is the back door of England. From time immemorial Scotland had been a perpetual menace to her southern Saxon neighbors. There was hatred between Scotland and England. When England warred against any European power they also had to maintain arms in readiness against the Scots, in the north. When the kings of England led their armies forth to the continent, that was the signal for Scotland to attack. This is why diplomatic relations with Scotland were continually carried on by the Tudors. Henry VII tried to make alliance after alliance with Scotland. If he could once bring Scotland to his side, his diplomacy in Europe would carry that much more weight. It was always Scotland that was behind the intrigues and uprisings against Henry VII, and who brought their forces into England when Henry VIII waged war in France. Inside Scotland there was continual dissension between the baronial families to control the crown. Nevertheless, "the one binding sentiment that could be relied on in a crisis was antagonism to England. If England's eyes were bent on France she must still manage to keep a watch on the north."³²

Henry VII tried to remedy this situation. In 1488 when James III of Scotland was murdered, and James IV was a boy, he tried to gain the support of the nobles. However, because of the many feuds among these families Henry could never be

32. A. D. Innes, op. cit., p. 33.

sure of a lasting peace. Finally, however, he gained a treaty with James IV through the marriage of his daughter, Margaret, with James. It was not destined to be a happy marriage or an end to the political problem. The bride was proud and pleasure loving, and the groom was very unstable.

For when Henry VIII was warring in France, the Scots under James IV attacked England. English forces were rallied by Catherine and the Scots were defeated decisively at Flodden Field. James IV was killed. Scotland was left, ³³ much as before, chafing under English domination.

Relations with the Papacy

It would seem that this discussion would pertain to a later chapter; however, we cannot help but see in the reign of Henry VII and, later Henry VIII, relations with the papacy purely of a political nature. The Pope was considered as a foreign prince and when relations were carried on with other countries the Pope played no small part. The developments which lead up to the break with the papacy also have their beginnings in the reign of Henry VII, though they are not outstandingly apparent on the surface.

Henry VII was an orthodox Roman Catholic and this to a large degree may account for the harmony that apparently existed during his reign. There was perhaps no serious fric-

33. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 189.

tion, but "no pope ventured to dispute Henry VII's nominations for English preferments; and they were made with strict regard to the interests of the Crown. Morton, Deanne, Warham, Foxe, Ruthal, Sherborne, Urswick, and others received their bishoprics and deaneries as rewards and endowments for civil and not for spiritual services....Henry indeed, characteristically regarded his relations with the church and papacy as a sound business connection."³⁴

Many churchmen in England were in politics and were the Tudors' best statesmen. They were useful to Henry VII in winning and holding his throne and they were useful to Henry VIII in extending his power. But as time went on the actions of the Pope in politics became more and more distasteful to Henry VIII. When the Pope formed the League of Cambrai supposedly for a better defense against the Turk and Henry saw that it was merely a cover up for aggression and banditry he refused to publish the papal bull in England which attempted to make the league look legitimate. Henry VIII's "generous illusions soon vanished before the sordid realities of European statecraft; and the defense of Christendom became with him, as with the others, a hollow pretense, a diplomatic fiction."³⁵

34. A. Pollard, "Henry VII", p. 61.

35. A. Pollard, "Henry VIII", p. 55.

II. The Breaking up of the Economic Feudal System Brought about Greater Centralization

The end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries may be regarded as the turning point from medieval to modern society.¹ By this time the economic revolution was almost completed. This is the era of revolutions: territorial, religious, and social.

The Creation of the New Gentry

The great and princely power of the barons disappeared. Their doom was sealed when Henry VII was victorious on Bosworth Field. The repressive policy of Henry VII so reduced the power of the barons that any future insurrection would be doomed forever. He created a new nobility. When the fiefs of the deceased barons fell to the king by escheat he re-issued the land to others. Previously the lay peers had legal jurisdiction in their powers. It went with the land. Now, however, Henry VII broke that power by disassociating any jurisdiction and government position whatsoever from ownership of the land. It is true, they could be appointed, but ownership did not include these functions as previously. The land of the peers was now subject to the courts, which in turn, were responsible to the King's Council. The dis-

1. W. Cunningham, The Growth of English Industry and Commerce During the Early and Middle Ages, I, p. 457.

trict was represented in Parliament by the election of one who represented his district in the House of Commons. No longer could the nobility convert retainers into armies as they had done. No longer could they use their jurisdictional powers in the affairs of the country. The old hereditary values had disintegrated. New families were ennobled; the old aristocracy meant nothing. The King himself was the grandson of a Welsh knight. Thus we see how this break of baronial power brought England to the establishment of a centralized government.²

The Economic Revolution Had Been Completed

The creation of the new gentry was only one of the signs of the breaking up of the feudal system. The agricultural revolution had been going on for the past hundred years. It was practically completed by the time of the English Reformation. Almost anyone could own, buy and sell land. The old manorial system had been and was fast changing by the turn of the century.

Agriculture

Up to this time, life in England had been almost completely rural, or we might call it, agricultural. Life was simple and revolved around the manor and the small village in which the serfs lived. Each village was independent in

2. A. D. Innes, op. cit., p. 7.

itself and intercourse with the outside world was practically unknown as we know it today. Each manor consisted of a manor house where the lord lived, a small mill, perhaps located on a stream of water, and the land. A certain amount of the land was cultivated for farming, another portion was used for pasture and the remainder was wooded. Each serf was to cultivate a certain section of the farm land. The amount of ground a serf farmed differed as much as from one to thirty acres. Usually each serf held rights to use the pasture land and to cut wood. Although the rules and regulations of each manor could differ, in general, the serfs had to work a stipulated amount of time for the lord and pay him a certain amount of dues, not so much at first with money, but in kind.

Then changes began to take place. There began the growth of a class of free tenant people. Service to the lord of the manor was commuted to money value. At the time of Henry I some manors were divided into land "at work" and land "at rent."³ The lords began to enclose waste lands and woodlands and rented it. This gave rise to the class of free tenants. In the thirteenth century the practice of commutation became more general. Jobs were considered in money value.

In 1349 a plague called the "Black Death" severely depopulated the rural areas. It has been estimated that the

3. W. J. Ashley, An Introduction to English Economic History and Theory, p. 20.

"Black Death" took as much as half the population of England. This had a decided effect upon the agricultural feudal system because there were now less workers than before and the peasants could afford to be more demanding. The "Black Death" practically spelled the doom of the manorial system. Wages doubled and tripled until the Statute of Laborers was passed which attempted to keep wages down. But it failed. Men were needed to work and the employers could not do otherwise than hire for high wages. Competition sprang up in the working classes and the lords and merchants also competed with each other in their payment of wages. The employer who could pay the higher wages could get the labor. When the Statute of Laborers was enforced it only caused lawlessness in the laboring class. They began to shift from one place to the other. These people came to be known as the free laboring class. This situation also gave rise to a class of people who became virtual vagabonds and "outlaws".

The lords found it impossible to cultivate all their land. They not only began to rent out more of their land, but also converted much of it to pasture land for the raising of sheep. The serf who was still tied to the land became more and more discontented. He saw many of his fellow workers earning money. The serf, too, wanted more freedom, and less burdensome duties which the lords demanded. Feudalism was beginning to split wide open. The peasants gave

overt evidence of their dissatisfaction in 1381 in what is known as the Peasants' Revolt.⁴

The Peasants' Revolt was an expression of the disintegrating of the existing social life. The rebellion was repressed but the old institutions, which had, to a certain extent, maintained order and enforced morality, never recovered any of their effectiveness.⁵ The agricultural revolution spread slowly but surely throughout England, and by the time of the Tudors it had advanced so rapidly as to receive their attention. When Richard II came to the throne a large part of the population of England were serfs. When Henry VII ascended the throne, serfdom was fast becoming extinct. "Manorial authority was ceasing to have the practical importance which it once possessed in regard to all the details of village life."⁶

After the "Black Death" and the Peasants' Revolt, when the population began to increase again both the lords and the serfs realized that to pay rent for the use of land, and to pay wages for labor was better than the old system of paying no rent and receiving no wages. The peasant became a free tenant and the lord hired the labor he needed. Thus by the middle of the fifteenth century most of the peasants were freemen. From commutation of service for money it advanced to rent for land and wages for labor.

It was not long before the landlords realized that the

4. G. M. Trevelyan, The Age of Wycliffe, p. 185.

5. W. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 376.

6. Ibid.

wasteland which they had converted to pasture was paying them more than their tilled land for which they received only a small rent. Along with this situation the laboring class grew larger. The supply of labor became greater than the demand. The landlord even began to convert tillage land into pasture land, thus throwing more people out of work as time went on. This is known as the practice of enclosure. The landlords became land "grabbers." Sheep raising became a profitable business. Men were turned off the soil and the laboring class became discontent. Many became vagabonds.

This greed on the part of the land owning class was not restricted to laymen only. "Such heartless greed of gain was bad enough in mere laymen; in churchmen, it was intolerable, yet the monasteries were no better than the lay landlords." ⁷ The acts of Parliament against enclosure of land did not help much. Open land farming seemed to be doomed with the coming of the wool business. The law was disregarded. "Abbots and barons, squires and tenant-farmers, even humble commoners of the village had enclosed both ⁸ for arable and pasture in defiance of the acts." Rents skyrocketed and evictions became more numerous. Even Wolsey could not stop it. "In some counties there is direct

7. A. D. Innes, "Social Life in Tudor England," Universal History of the World, J. A. Hammerton, ed., Vol. VI, p. 3487.

8. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 221.

evidence to show that the ecclesiastical landlord exacted higher rents both for arable and pasture than his lay neighbor."⁹ This dislocation of labor caused much want and misery and it was the cause of banditry and local uprisings such as the so-called "Pilgrimage of Grace" at the time of Henry VIII, in which the peasants of Kent marched against London. Unlike modern days, unemployment was a new problem of the sixteenth century. It was a period of transition; a period of the rise of new classes in society.

The Capital and Labor Classes

When the landlord began to commute service for a payment of stipulated fees, the rent was often paid in goods. Gradually, however, money came to be the medium of exchange. Rent and wages began to be computed in terms of money. By the close of the fourteenth century money had come into use in almost all parts of the country for many economic purposes. Then when the landlord found that sheep raising was profitable and converted his land for that purpose he also acquired wealth. This wealth accumulated in the hands of a few and capitalism came into being. Not only did the capitalist learn that his money would buy land to make more money, but also that his money could make more money through loans, and investment. Society came to be divided, as in our democratic system, into capitalists and laborers.

9. Ibid., p. 222.

The free class of laborers who could find work during this time often found the wages low. It was the merchants and the large craftsmen who reaped the profits. Instead of being able to work himself up to a higher position, the laborer found that he might hold one position all his life. The employer found out during these times that he had to have capital. Formerly in the guild system when a man had gone through the progressive stages of apprentice and journeyman he could become a master and set up his own business. His tools were his capital. It was no longer that way. Now the master was not so much the master of his craft, but the master of his servants, of laborers. Competition had come in to play and there was no success in a business if one had no stocks of material to be worked up for sale. He also had to have a staff of employees. The restrictions of the towns and the guilds had been overthrown and competition with another man in the same business required capital. Thus the man who had the capital controlled labor, and the laborer, because he could not get enough capital to start his own business, had to look forward to working for wages only, without any advancement.¹⁰ This made for the beginning of the class of men who belonged to labor. He became known as just that. The lines between capital and labor began to be drawn more sharply.

10. A. D. Innes, "Social Life", p. 3491.

In the early Middle Ages wages were based on reasonableness. But there is now a change. Wages are made dependent upon prices. Formerly the prices depended upon wages. If a merchant or landlord could not hire labor cheaply his prices would go up. During this time, however, the wages paid the laborer changed with the price which the merchant received for his goods. To show that there was a centralization of an organized government in England with the breaking up of feudalism we now find Parliament taking interest in legislation for the wages of laborers. The regulation of wages took on a national scope rather than a mere local affair of the guilds and corporations. Wages and hours of labor are brought within the scope of Parliament.¹¹

The Development of Trade and Commerce, Foreign and Domestic

The rise of the capitalist class is closely connected with trade and commerce. One of the great features of the sixteenth century is the development of the commercial spirit, which in turn meant more wealth for some. There was a great desire to grow rich, and trade and commerce were the means. In the earlier Middle Ages men had desired to accumulate land, but now land is replaced by money. It carried power and influence and it distinguished the old from the new. The military aristocracy is being replaced by a commercial and money-making aristocracy. This social structure

11. A. Pollard, "Henry VII", p. 46.

was the basis for the great chartered trading companies. The great expenditure and show of wealth of the court of Henry VIII set an example for the wealthy to follow.

Henry VII made it his business to advance the commerce of England. His work was largely devoted to promoting England's overseas commerce. Henry made commercial treaties with most of the states in western Europe. Trade and commerce became a national concern rather than merely a local enterprise. The trade which England did have at the time of Henry VII was monopolized by one or two corporations. The individual was too weak to carry on foreign trade by himself. Henry VII wanted to build up a native English trade. Foreign merchants at the time were controlling most of the trade in England and there were many complaints by the Englishmen to that fact, because the foreigners did not have to pay taxes. Henry assessed these foreign merchants twice as much as he did the local men. In 1478 he passed a statute that forbade the taking of money out of England without his permission, compelling the foreign merchants to spend their money on English goods. In 1487 this act was made perpetual. It became a penal offense to take more than ten crowns in cash from the country.¹² This was not only aimed at the Irish foreign merchants to keep the cheap Irish silver out of England and to hold up the worth of money at home, but

12. H. A. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

it also effected the church; less money could be sent to Rome.

Henry VII also encouraged ship building. The first dry dock was built at Portsmouth. Up to this time English shipping was in a state of decay. Not only were the English coasts open to attack, but also the foreign traders were carrying most of the goods in their ships. With the coming of wool and cloth manufacture in England there was an increasing amount of trade transportation by English ships. Navigation laws required that goods for England be imported by English ships, but at the time it was not effective, because England did not have many ships. Nevertheless, the monopolies of foreign trade were being broken down because of the national interest in trade and commerce.

The great part of trade at this time was controlled by the Hansa League. The Hansa merchants and the Venetians had established themselves in London and Southampton, especially. Henry VII saw that it would be wise to favor the Hansa because he received privileges from them which helped to increase the trade of England. The Norwegian and Arctic waters proved to be a good market for England's goods. The monopoly of the Italians in the Mediterranean, however, was broken down during this time by increased shipping and duties put on the imported goods from Venice.

It was not difficult for England to sell her wool abroad and her best market was in the Netherlands. Soon English

cloth was competing with that of the Flemings. By establishing this outlet England could compete with the Hansa successfully.

Along with this increase in foreign trade and commerce on a national scale we also find an increase in trade within the country. Internal trade was becoming national rather than local. Parliament also began to legislate in the interest of internal trade and industry. Steps were taken to bring about a uniformity in weights and measures and the currency was improved. This shows that internal trade and industry were also a concern of the national government, something which had not happened before. This came with the break down of feudalism and the rise of an organized national government. Where the craft guilds and merchant companies had regulated industry we now find the government taking an interest. But these institutions decayed and the spirit of enterprise came forth with its competition and use of money as a medium of exchange. "Old institutions of every kind, in town and country, were falling to pieces; new attempts were being made to regulate industry and encourage commerce; that lies on the surface and no one can fail to observe it. But the completeness of the change cannot be satisfactorily accounted for until we see that the principles on which the economic organization of the Middle Ages was based were being discarded, and that the system which was rising on its ruins was being framed in accordance with en-

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tremely different ideas and objects."

The Rise and the Fall of the Towns

We cannot separate trade and industry within the country from the rise and the fall of the towns. They were intimately connected. With the rise of industry we see the decaying of the town system of the old Middle Ages.

Trade during the early Middle Ages was confined to a great extent to trade between towns. Trade time was at the markets and fairs. The towns were not large. The average population of a town was about 1500-4000.¹⁴ Each town had its own government and courts and it existed by right of a charter or grant from the king. It paid its taxes to the king in a lump sum. It was represented in Parliament. It controlled its internal affairs. Town life was corporate. Everything was regulated by the town and was usually controlled by a guild. Each town followed the tendency of medieval society, that of close union with one's fellows. The right to have markets and fairs was also granted by the king. These grants were usually given to the burgesses, noblemen, or to the abbeys. Whoever held this grant to conduct markets and fairs in the town also could collect tolls on goods which foreign merchants brought in. Fairs were held about once a year and at this time selling and buying by the people

13. W. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 459.

14. E. P. Cheney, An Introduction to the Industrial and Social History of England, p. 50.

was carried on. The merchants who displayed their wares also had to pay tolls for the space they took up in the town during the market or fair. Each town monopolized its own goods and trade, and no outsider could carry on trade without special permission. No one could bring in his own business without the permission of the town.

One of the primary purposes of the town system in the Middle Ages was defense and protection.¹⁵ Since each town was independent in itself it also had to provide for its own protection. There was no centralized and organized national government that took over this duty, since not even the kings themselves had large armies. In the manorial system each feudal lord called upon his subjects to give of their time to fight his battles, and he was also expected to protect his peasants. But when the agricultural feudal system began to break up and more power was centered in the national government; when order began to come out of the chaos, the national government attempted to give protection to its subjects.

The decay of the old town system comes with the sixteenth century. One reason, which has been alluded to above, is because the towns are no longer needed for defense and protection of the people. The merchants and the tradesmen could move about over the country more freely and did not have to depend upon the towns for protection. They could

15. J. A. Froude, History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth, Vol. I, p. 17.

move to more convenient places to trade. This left some of the towns without any business and as a result they gradually died out and became "ghost towns." Another reason why many of the towns decayed and became uninhabited was because of the damage that had been done to them during the War of the Roses. Many of them were burned down and never redovered their former prosperity. It required money to protect a town with adequate defenses, and money meant taxation. "It is obvious that whenever a town was temporarily injured from any accidental circumstance, the necessary contributions would fall very heavily on those who were left, and the temptation to migrate from corporate towns must have been very great."¹⁶ The tendency was to go to places where there were no corporate towns; where the restrictions of business and the burdens of tolls and taxes were not so heavy. Therefore, we find new towns springing up over the country.

The primary reason why the towns decayed we find in the break up of the guild system, along with free enterprise and the increase of wealth, which in short means: the break up of the feudal system and the emergence of a centralized government.

The guild System

As we have seen, the towns were usually controlled by a guild. The guild was a tightly knit organization wich might

16. W. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 456.

be compared to a union, except that the guild also owned and controlled both capital and labor. Anyone who was not a member of a guild could neither buy nor sell except under conditions set by the controlling guild. Therefore, foreign trade in the towns was prohibited if it interfered with the business which that particular guild was carrying on. The guild itself was exempt from the tolls which others had to pay. "The principle reason for the existence of the guild¹⁷ was to preserve to its own members the monopoly of trade." For example, the guild of the city of Southampton had the following rule: "And no one in the city of Southampton shall buy anything to sell again in the same city unless he is of the guild merchant or of franchise."¹⁸ Not only was the guild a protection, but it was also a fraternity in which all the members shared the profits. They held regular meetings, elected officers, did charitable work and helped one another when in need.

The merchant guild was one of the earlier ones. It protected the trading and manufacturing in the towns and in general protected the local trader and his products on the market. Their constant fear was that the hated "foreigner" would bring his goods in and under sell and thus ruin the local trade. In later years the merchant guild was reduced to a charitable and fraternity organization because of

17. E. P. Cheney, op. cit., p. 52.

18. Ibid., p. 53.

the decay of towns and the break-up of the guild system¹⁹
in general, as it was known in the Middle Ages.

With the manufacture of leather goods and the growth of the cloth industry, especially, the craft guilds began to appear and take the place of the merchant guilds. The weavers were one of the first organized of the craft guilds. The objective of the craft guild was to insure reasonable rates and control conditions of industry within the towns. They also made regulations to maintain good quality in their wares. These guilds, too, had their social relationships, religious observances and charitable works. This is no doubt one reason for their decay. When people began to have a national outlook and broadened their scope of interest, because of the nationalistic spirit, the guilds were no longer needed to perform these latter functions which held feudal society together so tightly. This is true especially of the non-industrial guilds which were organized purely for religious and social purposes.

With the coming of the fifteenth century the industrial guilds began to fall into discredit. There were difficulties between the craft and merchant guilds and between the municipal officers and national regulation of the guilds. But the principal reason for the decline of the guild system was that industry dispersed itself outside the chartered towns where there were no restrictions. The wool in-

19. Ibid., p. 55.

dustry gave great impetus to free trade and free industry unregulated by any association. There were difficulties within the guilds. When men saw that they could no longer advance themselves to masters in the guild system they set up their own small business in the new towns without restrictions. When town life decayed, the guild system declined because it was dependent on such a close knit unit as the medieval town where they could have a monopoly on their craft. Formerly fines had been imposed upon those who tried to jump from an apprentice to a craftsman or from one level to another without fulfilling the requirements of the guild. But now these fines were lowered. Groups began to organize within the guild, in opposition to one another. This was mainly because wealth came into the hands of a few. The journeymen organized their separate group; even the masters divided because the rich separated themselves. ²⁰ In the end all these groups suffered because industry was going into the rural areas. The city merchants were buying land and setting up their industry in the country. Instead of local regulations of the guilds there are now statutes of government to help control trade and industry. Thus the guilds were being deprived of their jurisdictional and administrative functions by a national centralized government, and were being superseded ²¹ by the government in many of their economic functions.

There can be little doubt that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in England saw the end of feudalism. Not only was

it the end of economic feudalism but also the end of feudalistic government, the end of feudalistic life. It is a turning point in the history of England. A turning from the old medieval life to the beginning of modern civilization. Where once had been de-centralization, and at best, a struggling powerful feudal lord at the head of the government, now a centralized monarchy takes its place. Isolated strongholds of trade and industry intimately connected with a feudal lord or baron or an association in an independent community now give way to a more free intercourse between the peoples of England. This is also the age of discoveries; the age of expansion, of enrichment, of individual initiative. Compare feudalism to a pyramid with the feudal barons and lords at the top in control, and the other phases of feudalistic society on down to the peasant at the bottom. With its break-up we find a more centralized government at the top and the feudal society being swept away to the very bottom. Nothing could stop it; not even the feudalistically organized church of Rome, which also was soon to be overthrown in England.

20. Ibid., p. 128.

21. Ibid., p. 136.

III. The Church Stood in the Way of Further Development

In the two previous chapters we have attempted to show that with the coming of the Tudor reign in 1485 there is also a definite change from medieval life to a more modern civilization. There is a definite advance over the old feudalistic society. The end of feudalism was especially apparent in the political and economic spheres. This was a gradual process. The government became more centralized as time went on. Henry VII laid a firm foundation for the other Tudors, and during the reign of Henry VIII we find an absolute monarch who ruled with such power over his subjects as had never been seen in England before. England was emerging as a national state and taking its place among the nations of Europe in importance and political influence. Economically England was out of the feudal period for all practical purposes. Those who could afford it could buy and sell land. This break up of feudalism had been going on everywhere and in all phases of life in England.

Knowing this, it is not difficult to see the motive for Henry VIII's break with Rome. Some try to find the motive in his divorce case, but as we shall see, that was only a pretext, only a test-case. With the changes going on in England from the old to the new type of government and economically to a new system, it is hardly likely that a king like Henry VIII would sit by and permit a foreign prince in the church of Rome to dictate to him. The facts point to

these conclusions: the real motive for the break with Rome is that Henry VIII wanted to abolish the medieval feudal system in England and have a definitely centralized government. These changes were taking place in the other phases of activity in England and he could see no reason why the feudalistically organized church should stop his advance and progress.

The church simply stood in the way of further progress. Politically it was not good to have the church of England give allegiance to a foreign potentate. That would detract from the importance of the state and loosen the ties between government and people. Economically and socially the organization and practice of the Roman church, as it was constituted in England, hindered such economic progress and weakened the effectiveness of any national economy.

The Temporal Power of the Pope

In order to show that the Reformation in England in its beginning was not a doctrinal reform but merely a break from the power of the Roman Pontiff we need only to discuss some of the activities of the latter. The Pope, because of his dealing and intrigues with nations, came to be considered as a foreign prince who had to be dealt with as the head of a temporal power. He was not the head of a spiritual organization in its true sense. Even though we con-

sider him at the head of a temporal power his alliances and dealings were not above corrupt politics. If it suited his purposed he would ally with the Turks, the avowed enemy of Christianity. This he did at one time against Venice. The Pope kept an army to fight his battles; he was involved in politics and wars; his was a foreign court. Therefore, it was inevitable that there should be antagonism on the part of emperors and rulers against the papacy.

How did this conflict arise between emperor and papacy? At the time of Emperor Frederick II the emperor claimed for himself the right of being the universal secular ruler. The Pope claimed universal ecclesiastical powers. Gradually, however, the claims of the emperors weakened and their claim of successive power from Caesar was broken, whereas, the Pope claimed his right of rule from St. Peter was unbroken and, therefore, declared himself to be the ruler of the whole west. For a long time the secular rulers did not dispute this claim. The Pope claimed power over the church and the state. During the middle of the thirteenth century the papacy reached the height of its power. Gregory VII (1073-1085) not only claimed the right to excommunicate rulers but to depose them, and to grant and withdraw political power. Innocent III (1198-1216) claimed that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, above all peoples and kingdoms, judged by no one, the judge of all, and has the power to appoint and depose secular rulers. Innocent IV at the Council of Lyons, in 1245, said

that there was no power ordained by God outside of the church. He deprived Frederick II of his rule and forbade his subjects to recognize him as emperor or king.¹ Thus the papacy was a political danger and a menace to the political sovereignty of rising nations, especially where an emperor previously had had no jurisdiction as in England. The nationalism in England and France was something new and a direct threat to the temporal power of the Pope.

The first important clash between an English monarch and the Papacy came between Edward I and Boniface VIII in the thirteenth century. England was one of the rising nations which was not in the empire. The monarchical power had begun to develop in England, along with representative government and national language. Edward I, a rather energetic king, attempted to assert his power over the Pope by taxing the clergy without the sanction of the Pope to support a war between England and France.² Boniface replied with the Clericos Laicos, a bull which prohibited the clergy from paying taxes and rulers from collecting them on threat of excommunication. The clergy paid their taxes! A few years later Edward I subdued the Scots. Boniface declared that he himself had feudal superiority over the Scots as Pope and cited Edward to Rome. But Edward refused to submit his temporal matters to the Pope saying: "Such a pro-

1. Mackinnon, J., The Origins of the Reformation, p. 5.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

ceeding would be subversive of the rights of the crown, the royal dignity, and the liberties, customs, and laws of the kingdom, which they were bound to maintain and defend, and would maintain and defend with all their might and by the help of God."³ The barons also drew up a letter to Boniface VIII in which they protested the decision of the Pope and defended the actions of Edward I.⁴ This meant that the English king declared himself independent of the pope in temporal matters.

The papal claim of superiority in secular matters became a pretense. The rising of new nations brought on a national spirit. The pope's political dealings lowered his respect among the secular rulers, and he became a national enemy. The idea prevailed that ecclesiastical independence was linked up with nationalism. Where there was the idea of national political independence there also was the idea of a national church. This was a carry over from the medieval idea that the state and the church exist together. Therefore, if the church is national then the head of the state should be at the head of the national church and reform the abuses in it. "This tendency is discernable in the anti-papal legislation in England in the fourteenth century."⁵ This in turn brought on increased activity of the papacy to dominate temporal rulers and to keep their hold on countries. In the Great Schism, for example, the rival popes competed

3. Ibid., p. 14.

4. H. Gee and W. J. Hardy, Documents Illustrative of

with each other to gain temporal power for the church. On the other hand, the secular rulers exploited the church and often benefited, with the Pope, from benefices and were willing to divide the "spoils."

In order to show that at this time the Pope was still acting as ruler of a national power, we consider some of his actions during the first years of Henry VIII's reign. These years were years of conflict on the continent. The League of Cambrai broke up. To the dismay of the Pope, Louis XII and Maximilian I began campaigns in Italy. When Louis took Venice the Pope was anxious to draw Henry VIII into a league against France, so much so, that he presented Henry with the golden rose, a rare honor for one who had just recently come to the throne. Henry, instead, made an alliance with France in 1510. Therefore, "in the depth of a bitter winter his Holiness (Julius II) took command of his own army, shared their hardships, and with helmet and breastplate buckled on him led them to the siege of Mirandola, which he won in January 1511." ⁶ In this year the Pope also formed the Holy League with Ferdinand to expel the French from Italy.

The dilemma in which the popes found themselves during this time is best summed up in the words of Pollard:

"The loss of their spiritual jurisdiction in England was part of the price paid by the popes for their

English Church History, p. 90.

5. J. Mackinnon, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

6. J. Gairdner, The English Church in the Sixteenth Century from the Accession of Henry VIII to the Death of Mary, p. 16.

temporal possession in Italy. The papal domains were either too great or too small. If the Pope was to rely on his temporal power, it should have been extensive enough to protect him from the dictation and resentment of secular princes; and from this point of view there was no little justification for the aims of Julius II. Had he succeeded in driving the barbarians across the Alps or into the sea, he and his successors might in safety have judged the world, and the breach with Henry might never have taken place. If the Pope was to rely on his spiritual weapons, there was no need of temporal states at all. In their existing extent and position, they were simply the heel of Achilles, the vulnerable spot, through which secular foes might wound the Vicar of Christ. France threatened him from the north and Spain from the south; he was ever between the upper and the nether mill-stone. Italy was the cockpit of Europe in the sixteenth century, and the eyes of the popes were perpetually bent on the worldly fray, seeking to save or extend their dominions.....The Vicar of Christ was lost in the petty Italian prince." 7

It was for this reason, too, that Englishmen had been excluded from the Pope's council. It would hardly be fitting that an Englishman rule over the Italian States as the Pope was doing. For nearly four centuries no Englishman had been Pope. Although Wolsey, Henry VIII's minister and Cardinal, attempted to gain that distinction, it never materialized. Perhaps the thing that grated on English nerves was the fact that the Pope was often a Frenchman or a Spaniard. They could see no reason why Italy should not be ruled over by the Pope so long as he was an Italian, but when a Frenchman became Pope and ruled over Italy, or when the French or Spanish nations ruled Italy with the Pope as their chaplain, "the growing spirit of nationality could bear it no longer; it responded at once to Henry's appeals against the claims of a foreign ju-

7. A. Pollard, "Henry VIII", p. 228.

risdiction."⁸ For that, in effect, would put England under a definite power and not merely under an ecclesiastical head who claimed temporal power.

Thus we see that the status of the papacy during the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries is precarious. The more the popes becamed embroiled in foreign affairs and politics the more they found themselves dominated and forced to bow to the will of those powers. Politically the papacy was a menace to England if it was to be dominated by England's enemies or England's rivals in the world. As Henry VIII realized, it was more advantageous to be free of that bond, for it stood in the way of the development of foreign political policies which were arising out of the new centralized government in England.

The Land Holding of the Church of England

One important thing that stood in the way of further economic development in England at this time were the estates of the church. Estimates have ranged all the way from one sixth to one half on the amount of land in England which the church held at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Although we do not know the exact ratio, it was a considerable amount, and large enough to hold up economic progress and the clearing away of the last vestige of feugalism in England.

8. Ibid., p. 231.

The reason that the land holdings of the church in England became such an important factor is that this land was ruled by the church and was not subject to the central government, nor, as we shall see in a later section, to the courts of the country. Along with the ownership of the land also went the governing of those people who lived on that land. The central government could have no jurisdiction there. And because the church was old and conservative the economic revolution was checked. It almost meant that there existed a government within a government. As time went on the church's property became more valuable because it was being used for sheep raising and agriculture, whereas, formerly it had been pasture land. Along with the landholdings and the control of the people living therein went the power that made itself felt in parliament. Gradually the clergy began to outnumber the laymen in parliament. Therefore, it was necessary that the government do something about the temporal holdings of the church. As we shall see later this action came about under Henry VIII in his break with Rome as he confiscated all church property, and broke the power of the church in England. Right or wrong, his actions were the natural reaction against a church which claimed to be spiritual yet wanted to live as a secular or temporal state within another state.

The church had gained its property by endowments and gifts of pious people and from governments. It gradually ac-

quired so much property that it became feudalized. Some of the bishops reigned as feudal lords. His domain was called the mensa episcopalis. Often his mensa "included part of the town around the cathedral and areas of land in various parts of the diocese, and even in neighboring dioceses."⁹

As any other manorial lord, the bishop had vassals to administer his property. Now during this time of the break-up of feudalism it became the practice to turn the arable land into pasture land in order to capitalize on the wool trade which was in great demand. The estates of the church owned much of this land, and, were not averse to acquiring more in order to make more money from sheep-raising.¹⁰ This tended to be a block against the central government.

There may be objections to the actions of Henry VIII, when he secularized and abolished the monasteries, on the grounds that they were useful to the people of England. It is true that in former times the monasteries and abbeys had been an integral part of the social system of England. Monasteries had promoted education, they had been the centers of learning in England. They had served as charitable institutions to the poor and had performed other functions as depositories for jewels and title-deeds, and centers of agri-

9. J. W. Thompson, Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages, p. 238.

10. E. P. Cheney, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

cultural activity. But the picture had changed within the last years with the coming of the Renaissance. Universities had taken over the task of education. The "Black Death" left the priesthood depleted and with an inferior quality of men who no longer attempted to carry on the same work of their predecessors. As centers of learning the monasteries had long since ceased to function.¹¹ As the state grew it wondered if the hospitality and alms-giving of the monasteries tended to make beggars and vagabonds of many people. If that was the only function which the vast holdings of the church could offer the people of the state then could not the state better serve that purpose? The trouble was, as we shall see, that the money which the estates of the church made was not kept in England but was sent to the "bottomless bag at Rome." The church had the power to tax its members, but the church property was immune from taxation.¹²

Another reason for the antagonism that was springing up in England against the land holdings of the church was that this was a time of growth in wealth and material prosperity. New fortunes were being amassed by the new middle class of people. Their appetite for land was keen because it could bring more wealth. The fact was that more people were wanting land and their eyes turned on the broad acres of the

11. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 371.

12. Ibid.

monasteries and abbeys.

One of the great sources of trouble came from the papal practice of provisions and reservations for the benefit of members of the curia and aliens. The Pope conveniently appointed those whom he wanted to the vacant bishoprics and offices in England, as well as in other countries, It was, in effect, an exploitation of Christendom.¹⁴ By appointing his own Italian friends to these offices the Pope received more revenue and had more property under his direct control than if an Englishman held the office. It was natural then that there would be opposition to these practices in England. Too often, however, the kings of England willingly gave in and overlooked some of the acts of Parliament that had been passed against this practice.

There had been numerous acts of Parliament against papal provisions and against the Pope's acquiring land in England since the days of Edward III. In 1410 the Commons even petitioned that church property be confiscated.¹⁵ Henry V seized alien priories. Wolsey helped to divert wealth from the monasteries to educational purposes. One act which holds special interest is the Mortmain act of 1279. Religious men were not to hold land without a license. They had evaded the provision and by their actions of acquiring more land also

13. A. D. Innes, "Social Life", p. 3498.

14. J. Mackinnon, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

15. H. A. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

received the income from it, depriving the country of this money which also was needed for defense purposes. The Mortmain Act provided that where this happened the land was to be confiscated. The conclusion of the Act reads thus:

"We thereupon, to the profit of our realm, intending to provide convenient remedy by the advice of our prelates, earls, barons, and other of our subjects, being of our council, have provided, established, and ordained, that no person, religious or other, whatsoever he be, presume to buy or sell any lands or tenements, or to receive them under the colour of right or lease, or any other title, whatsoever it be, or by any other craft or device appropriate them to himself, under pain of forfeiture of the same, whereby such lands or tenements may in any wise come into mortmain." 16

Thus, up to the time of the confiscation of the church's property by Henry VIII we find that the antagonism between government and church wealth increases with the centuries. Both strove to grow and to expand, but there was not room for two such forces in England. The church with its land holdings had to be subjected to a centralized government or else the growth of political and economic England must eventually come to a halt. Henry VIII did not choose to be owned and operated by a foreign prince. The only logical thing to do, which he did, would be to break the power of the church in England and thus be free from it.

16. H. Gee and W. J. Hardy, op. cit., p. 82.

The Ecclesiastical Courts Oppose Centralization

It has been pointed out previously that where a government expects to be centralized and control a country it must have jurisdiction among its people. The stumbling block to centralization in England during the sixteenth century was exactly this very point. If it could not control its people through its court system it could not actually become centralized. The fact was that in England there was a double court system at this time. The government was trying to strengthen its court system and the ecclesiastical courts opposed this action by their very being and function. The government could not tolerate a double court system because it would have no effective means of dealing with criminals or legal affairs of community or country. Let us see what it meant to have a double system such as existed at this time.

When Henry VII was trying to establish his throne in the latter part of the fifteenth century he had to deal with many pretenders to the crown and with men who led rebellions against him, not to mention the general lawlessness that existed throughout most of the country. This meant that if he were to bring these offenders to justice and legally put them out of the way of further intrigues he would need courts to do this work. But when Henry VII attempted to bring criminals to justice he found that they were taking advantage of

what was known as the right of sanctuary. This meant that the law officers could not arrest anyone who took refuge in a church. That is exactly what the guilty did. They defied the law by means of a special privilege which the church enjoyed. The implications of abuse of this privilege were far reaching. Law and order could never be firmly established. The government could not perform its function of protection to its citizens when the church harbored public criminals. The reason why law and order were restored in England so slowly after the War of the Roses was that Henry VII was still a loyal son of the church and was not too quick to brush this privilege aside.

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The evil of the church, however, which actually blocked the workings of any secular court system was the "benefit of clergy." This was another privilege which the church enjoyed, and one which was abused so much. It meant that everyone who could read was entitled to trial before an ecclesiastical court, which in effect, meant a milder punishment, although a generous penance was usually extracted from the culprit. More funds for the pope and less jurisdiction for the crown!

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This practice of "benefit of clergy" which kept clerical murderers and thieves from temporal courts, however, was becoming obsolete in the sixteenth century because of its

17. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 19.

18. Ibid., p. 20.

abuses, and because of the rise of secular courts and restrictions against the former. The ecclesiastical court system became "harmful to public security and offensive to the instinct of civil equality."¹⁹ The reason this privilege had lasted so long was because of the majority of ecclesiastics in Parliament.

Henry II, long ago, had tried to bring criminal clerks to justice but in vain. The acts of Parliament under his reign were not in favor of abolishing this privilege but began to limit the abuse somewhat. With the latter part of the reign of Henry VII we find remedies and measures against it. Pollard summarizes these measures thus:

"Henceforth it needed episcopal or other unexceptional testimony to the criminal's genuine clerical character to save him more than once for retribution. If this were not forth coming the criminal was, for his second murder or theft, to be punished like a layman. Identification was secured by branding first offenders on the ball of the left thumb with an M for murder, the brand of Cain, and a T for theft or other crimes. Real clergy were, after conviction, claimed by the church and subjected to penance or even imprisonment. It was an ingenious division of authority to leave the judgment of criminal clerks to the lay courts, and reserve execution to the church, which was prohibited by the law of God from shedding blood. But Parliament showed a desire for more; and in 1491 the benefit of clergy was similarly restricted to persons in holy orders, in the case of deserters from the army, and of servants who murdered their masters." 20

The right of sanctuary was also limited at this time, but only in so far that first offenders could make use of

19. Ibid., p. 210.

20. A. Pollard, "Henry VII", p. 65.

the right. This action was not taken by Henry VII of his own initiative, but he obtained papal bulls to that effect. The abuses of these privileges were no doubt committed by criminals, and the fault of the system did not lie in them or in the immorality of churchmen, but it was rather a problem in which the church insisted on its "liberties and in its tenderness to every scoundrel who had any pretence to clerical privileges."²¹

At the beginning of Henry VIII's reign the Commons took more action against the abuses of the benefit of clergy. A real controversy about this very thing raged among the members of Parliament. It was even debated before the king by representatives of the Commons and the clerics. "It was a debate between fresh and outworn modes of thought, between the medieval and the modern spirit."²² The controversy went much deeper than the benefit of clergy. Henry VIII, through his representative, Dr. Henry Standish, warden of the Greyfriars in London, maintained that papal decrees did not bind a region where custom was contrary to it and that temporal judges could convene clerks before their courts. It became a case of temporal power against ecclesiastical. The king's men maintained that the king could even hold parliament without the spiritual leaders because they were there only as temporal possessors and not as spiritual leaders. In other words,

21. Ibid., p. 66.

22. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 221.

Parliament was a lay tribunal and the source of law is secular. At this time, Wolsey, Henry's minister, stood with the clergy, and they held that no temporal judge could try any clerk of any order or convene a clerk before a lay tribunal. Wolsey then suggested that Henry permit the Pope to decide! The king then knew that the cardinal and archbishop exalted a foreign court above his own. Henry later found his assistance in the common law judges of England. The bill which was up before Parliament at this time was to restrict the use of the benefit of clergy but was never passed by this Parliament. Wolsey suggested a speedy dissolution of Parliament. It did not convene for another eight years.

Not only the ecclesiastical court system in England held up centralization, but also the fact that the Pope set himself up in Rome as the one who has final jurisdiction over any case in any country. It was in fact a foreign court, just as Henry VIII suspected. We find evidence of opposition against this jurisdiction of the papacy, which reached out into all countries, in England in 1353 when the first Statute of Praemunire was passed. This act made it treason to appeal to the Pope against the King. A second Statute of Praemunire was passed in 1393 in protest over the Pope's drawing people out of the country to answer for things which pertain only to the king's court. It was not, however, un-

23. Ibid., p. 215.

24. H. Gee and W. J. Hardy, op. cit., p. 104.

til Henry VIII broke with Rome that this jurisdictional power of the papacy was broken in England. It was one of the reasons of the break with the Pope. The church had to be deprived of its political power and its power over the courts so that the monarchy could grow as it should. To be centralized the government also needed power to enforce law and to carry out its policies in its own country.

Papal Finance Was and Is at this Time Met with Opposition

Papal finance is closely connected with the power of the papacy as a temporal power, for the popes received much of their income from landholdings. It is not difficult to see how the income from these papal holdings were a constant drain on the economy of the country as a whole. This is another reason why the church stood in the way of further development in England. As long as money flowed to Rome instead of remaining in the country there could not be much advancement of the new economy which used money as its basis. In the old feudal economic system money was not considered as essential to prosperity as it is now, with the breaking up of the feudal system as we have seen. The whole system of papal provisions, benefits to aliens and the income from land constituted a block in economic advancement and in the centralization of government. The government wanted these financial resources for itself to maintain its growth and the growth of the country in general.

William E. Lunt in his book, Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages, lists no less than twenty-two ways in which the papacy collected revenues. ²⁵ We shall discuss only a few of the better known ones.

One source of Revenue which originated in England was called Peter's Pence. This revenue was paid the same as a tribute to the Pope by the countries that were owned and protected by the Pope. It had its origin in England as early as 796, and developed into a payment which all the people made. Each home was assessed one penny. Innocent III said he wanted a penny from "each house that smoke out of comes." ²⁶ The papal collector exacted the pope's share from the dioceses. This payment was abolished by Henry VIII.

Another benefice tax of great financial importance was the annates. This tax was a portion of the first year's revenues of a benefice. This was closely connected with the practice of the Pope's appointing his Italian friends to church offices in England. He could grant the benefice and thus reserve the annates for himself. The Statute of Provisors was passed in 1351 which prohibited the Pope from appointing church officials in England. A second statute of

25. W. E. Lunt, Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages, discusses these means of revenue: Patrimonies, census, tribute, Peter's Pence, income tax, subsidies, services, visitation tax, annates, fruits during vacancies, fruits wrongfully received, quindennia, spoils, procurations, indulgences, legacies, chancery taxes, compositions, oblations, gifts, profits of jurisdiction, sale of offices.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Provisors was passed in 1390 under Richard II with additional safeguards added.²⁷ But unless each king was willing to enforce it there was no stopping this practice.

Except for the sale of indulgences, which in theory was not the sale of the forgiveness of sins, but the paying of money instead of doing penance, the greatest source of income was the sale of offices at the papal court. Boniface IX (1389-1404) because of financial difficulties, began this practice. As the curial bureaucracy increased there were more new offices to sell. The purpose, of course, of creating new offices, was to raise money by selling them to men who had the money to buy them. This practice developed on a large scale in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

"The traffic was so profitable that additions to the staff continued to be made well into the sixteenth century, though a portion of the services and annates had to be assigned to the new colleges in order to make the offices sufficiently attractive to purchasers. Each office was sold for a sum varying from five hundred to several thousand ducats. There were few that cost less than a thousand ducats. In December of 1505 the offices sold netted 20,500 ducats, and in April of 1506 11,850 ducats. Under Leo X (1513-1521) the sale of offices provided nearly one-sixth of the ordinary income of the papal budget." 28

The Pope, however, was not satisfied to collect dues and taxes from his English constituency. It was bad enough when he sent collectors to England to raise money for one of his private wars. The ardor of the clergy and people cooled

27. H. Gee and W. J. Hardy, op. cit., p. 90.

28. W. E. Lunt, op. cit., p. 136.

somewhat for the papacy after a taxation would be over. Collections and dues were not enough, however. Italian bankers came to England with the power and prestige of the papacy behind them, and set up their businesses in London. Their specialty was loaning money to those individuals who needed money to pay their tithes, taxes and levies to the Pope. Interest, at times, went as high as 50%.²⁹ Not only were individuals taken advantage of, but also some of the religious corporations that had to meet their payments to the Pope. The foreign bankers began to control a great share of the money in England, so much so that even the kings would borrow from them. Papal finance, indeed, became an odious thing to the Englishman, especially during the sixteenth century when England began to expand in trade and commerce, and when people within England began to use and need money to buy and sell and carry on within the country.

Storms of protest over papal finance in England broke out already in the thirteenth century and papal prestige began to decline. This discontent over the control of wealth by the papacy in England never quite calmed down until the break with Rome by Henry VIII in 1533.³⁰ In 1307 the Statute of Carlisle was passed, which was directed against papal patronage. Too much money was going from the monasteries

29. O. A. Marti, "Popular Protest and Revolt Against Papal Finance in England from 1226-1258", Princeton Theological Review, XXV, 4, (Oct. 1927), p. 612.
 30. Ibid., p. 610.

in England to the religious houses on the continent. This act was directed against the sending of money out of England.

Thus we see that papal finance in England had for years been met with opposition. It culminated in the break and was one of the causes. As we shall see in the succeeding chapter, the power of papal finance was reduced through the confiscation of the monasteries and complete removal of ties with the Roman Church.

It needs to be emphasized again that England was coming out from under the influence of the feudal system politically and economically. Free enterprise, free trade, and the right to own property, the increase in wealth, and, in general, the change from medieval to modern modes of economy and life made England look, not to a foreign power in Rome, but to its own interests. And the best thing it could do to progress was to cut loose from the bonds of feudalism which still existed in England in the form of the temporal power of the Roman Church. In the place of the medieval baronial monarchy emerged a more centralized government under the Tudors. For its own progress and existence it could not permit another state to exist within itself, with its own court system, its own financial system, and its wealth and power. Therefore, a break with Rome was inevitable at some time, if it continued to act in such a manner. The actions of the twenties and thirties of the sixteenth century had far reaching effects. The facts of the case we review in the next chapter.

IV. The Break with the Church of Rome

The Reformation in England is often misunderstood, particularly the first stages of it. We look in vain if we attempt to find a change of doctrine in the break with Rome. The Reformation in England is entirely unlike the Reformation in Germany where Luther brought about a reform in doctrine. That was his objective, although much of his support came from men who sought political ends for themselves, and which Luther did not encourage. In England the picture is altogether different. The political aims are first and the change in doctrine which came later was only a by-product of the actions of Henry VIII in the break with the Roman Church. This we will see as we follow the events and actions of the actual break with Rome. Henry VIII wanted to be free of any restraining power of the papacy. Doctrine meant little or nothing in his reformation. It is a unique part of English history for that very reason.

Opposition Against the Papacy Had a Long History

In 1066 William the Conqueror forbade his people to acknowledge the Roman Pontiff as apostolic or to receive any letter from the Pope unless it had first been shown to the king himself. ¹ In 1076 William wrote to Pope Gregory VII:

1. H. Gee and W. J. Hardy, op. cit., p. 59.

"I refused to do fealty, nor will I, because neither have I promised it, nor do I find that my predecessors did it to your predecessors." ² Here we see what a great difference of feeling there was for the papacy when a country grew up, not under the jurisdiction of an emperor, but as an independent state under a king. This is no doubt one of the greatest reasons for the opposition against the Pope in England through the centuries up to the break when this nationalistic feeling was more intensive.

That was only the beginning. In 1164, under the reign of Henry II, we find the enactment of more legislation against recognizing the Pope as a ruler, in the form of the Constitutions of Clarendon. It was an attempt to lead the people to recognize the king as their ruler and head, and not the Pope. The Constitutions of Clarendon prohibited people of England from appealing further than the king³ without his consent. The fact that people were allowed or commanded by the Pope to appeal to him above their king was humiliating to the monarchs of England. In every century there are acts against the power of the papacy.

We have already alluded to the actions of Edward I in 1301 when he opposed the Pope on the Scottish question. His barons sent a letter to the Pope defending their king and

2. Ibid., p. 56.

3. Ibid., p. 71.

protesting the actions of the former. Then in the fourteenth century the statutes of provisors and praemunire were passed. The former prohibited the Pope from appointing church officials in England. The latter made it a penal offense to recognize the Pope's officials or to enforce his bulls. In 1366 Wycliffe protested against the annual tribute which England had to pay the Pope. John Lackland had promised this payment and had signed England over to the Pope as a fief when England was hard pressed by the Scots. In 1428, Henry IV, reminded the people that they ought not to recognize any legates sent to England by the Pope.⁴

These instances of antagonism against the power of the papacy serve to prove that, although the actual break with Rome was comparatively sudden, the feeling against Rome had a long history. This also bears out the fact that, as nowhere else, there was a spirit of nationalism and independence in England. They had never had close ties with the papacy as the European powers under the emperors. English development had been more along nationalistic lines. Therefore, the reason why Henry VIII succeeded where such men as Henry II failed in the break with Rome was that the spirit of nationalism and independence in England had greatly developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as we have pointed out in earlier chapters. Papal authority had suf-

4, Ibid., p. 140.

ferred much during this time also, because of its un-Christian dealings politically. A case in point: In 1526 Charles V, Emperor, captured Francis I of France and the latter promised that he would not cause more trouble. The Pope, however, relieved Francis of his oath to Charles and urged him to fight Charles again, which he did. This agreement between Francis and the Pope to fight Charles was known as the League of Cognac. Charles V knew who was responsible and immediately marched on Rome and sacked the city and took the Pope captive. The reason behind the Pope's actions was that he thought Charles was becoming too powerful and wanted him stopped. It was at this time, too, that the Pope found himself in the dilemma of either granting Henry VIII his divorce from Catherine, and disobey Charles, or not grant it and suffer more at the hand of the Emperor. All these actions certainly caused people to look upon the papacy with some sarcasm and no little contempt. Papal authority had also suffered because of the Babylonian Captivity of the church (1305-1376) when Clement V moved the curia to the French city of Avignon and where the papacy was subservient to French rule. This was especially antagonistic to Englishmen because England was at war with France at this very time. The Great Schism (1378-1417), in which no less than three popes at the same time claimed to be the Vicar of Christ on earth, certainly did not enhance the papal power and prestige. These, then, are some of the reasons why English kings did not want

to be under the power of a papacy that was dominated by foreign and hostile interests, or a papacy that tried to dictate to king and people.

The Divorce Was Used by Henry VIII as a Pretext for the Break

Henry VIII was eleven years old when his brother Arthur died. Spain wanted the marriage between Henry and Catherine to take place for reasons of which we have spoken in our second chapter. They knew that this would require a papal dispensation because of the Levitical law which prohibited such a marriage of a deceased brother's widow. In due time the dispensation was granted, and the marriage took place in 1509.

By 1527 Henry VIII made it known to Cardinal Wolsey that he wanted a divorce from Catherine. This action would require another dispensation from the Pope. Clement VII, however, was now dominated by Charles V who had just sacked Rome and was holding the Pope captive. As long as Charles dictated to the Pope there would be no dispensation for Henry VIII. This was, indeed, a dilemma in which the papacy found itself during these years.

The divorce finally led to the breach with Rome, but it was not the cause of the Reformation. It was only a convenient opportunity for England to break the power of the Roman Church in England and to put it under the domination of the

crowns. The great majority of the people of England must have been favorable to the break for there was no serious opposition on their part. The breaking point between two powers had finally come and Henry VIII found this way to declare England free of the papacy.

"The divorce was the spark which ignited the flame, but the combustible materials had been long existent. If the divorce had been all, there would have been no Reformation England. After the death of Anne Boleyn, Henry might have done some trifling penance at his subjects' expense, made the Pope a present, or waged a war on one of Clement's orthodox foes, and that would have been the end. Much had happened since the days of Hildebrand, and Popes were no longer able to exact heroic repentance. The divorce, in fact, was the occasion, and not the cause, of the Reformation." 5

The reason for Henry's desire for a divorce from Catherine has been erroneously attributed to his love for Anne Boleyn, daughter of one of England's noble families. Henry VIII's personal life does not bear out this fact. His moral code did not restrict him to one wife or keep him from illicit relations with other women. Anne Boleyn merely happened to be the one whom he wanted to use as a means to an end. Anne Boleyn's "place in English history is due solely to the circumstance that she appealed to the less refined part of Henry's nature."⁶ Henry's doubts as to the validity of his marriage with Catherine have also been given as the reason for wanting a divorce from her. Henry, under Thomas Cranmer, had the universities look into the matter of Canon Law and

5. A. Pollard, "Henry VIII", p. 232.

6. Ibid., p. 192.

the prohibited degrees of marriage. These actions, too, however, are overshadowed by the real causes and reasons which lie in Henry's desire to be rid of the ties with Rome and to be the head of his own church in England.

Perhaps one fact does have some weight in Henry's considerations for a divorce. He had no male heir to succeed him on the throne. But this reason again was only a means to an end for he would not hesitate to cast off any number of wives who would not bear a male heir. Catherine and Henry had six children and only one daughter, Mary, lived. He needed a male successor because if Mary took the throne, the country would no doubt again be thrown into civil war. There were still pretenders for the crown in the country. If Mary married a foreign prince England would be subject to that country. In fact, marriage in France or Spain would almost be certain to bar her succession because the English disliked these nations.⁷ Relations with Spain were becoming more strained as time went on. Catherine was practically acting ambassador of Spain to England. This, of course, had serious drawbacks. Henry had been betrayed by Ferdinand in his invasion of France in 1514. He did not want to leave a disputed inheritance. The Tudors were beginning to establish themselves firmly on the throne. Therefore, Henry wanted a new wife to have a legitimate male heir.

7. Ibid., p. 180.

He had no scruples about mistresses, but heirs from them would cause dissention. He, therefore, conveniently saw the judgment of God in his childlessness for marrying his brother's wife! He wanted the Pope's dispensation so that everything would be "legitimate." In subsequent actions and the Pope's refusal to give the dispensation Henry VIII saw his chance to forever break from the power of the Church of Rome.

The Actions During the Breach with Rome

The divorce proceedings were put into the hands of Cardinal Wolsey and Henry instructed him to obtain the dispensation. The Pope's legate, Campeggio arrived in England and opened court at Blackfriars, in London, on May 31, 1529. It dragged on until July. Campeggio procrastinated and finally postponed the proceedings until October. Why? Looking behind the scenes we find that the Pope in December of 1527 had "escaped" the imperial forces. Wolsey obtained from him a conditional dispensation for Henry's divorce from Catherine and remarriage to Anne. Wolsey also wanted a decretal bull which would practically determine a favorable verdict for Henry's divorce, which would invalidate Julius II's dispensation for the marriage. At first the Pope refused. Pressure was put on the imperialist cardinals. Meanwhile, Francis I of France was again becoming militarily more powerful. He captured Naples. Therefore, with

Charles' forces weakening the Pope made concessions again. The decretal bull, which would give Henry the divorce was put into the hands of Campeggio undated, so that it could be revoked if necessary. ⁸ In 1528, however, when the trial in England was about to take place, Charles' imperial forces were again on the ascendancy. This changed the political picture again for the Pope, since Charles was against a dispensation for Henry, and the Pope could only afford to submit to the power of Charles. Furthermore, news was brought to the Pope that Charles had in his possession a letter which Julius II had written to Isabella in 1503 that her daughter's marriage with Henry VIII was perfectly legal. If this were true the Pope could not allow the decretal bull to be published which invalidated Julius' dispensation and would make Charles an enemy. Therefore, Campeggio received word to destroy the bull. Thus the trial came to nothing. The divorce case could not be isolated from the European affairs. The Pope was too involved there to give a dispensation. It was not a matter of morality or legality, but one of power and diplomacy. ⁹ The Pope and Charles signed a treaty and Henry VIII was cited to appear in Rome, in person or proxy, to stand trial for the divorce.

Never before had a king of England been tried in a foreign court and Henry VIII was determined that it should not

8. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 275.

9. Ibid., p. 286.

happen now. Wolsey was useless to Henry now, therefore he was replaced by Thomas Cranmer, who had suggested that the king use the universities to back his divorce demands. Parliament was convened on November 3, 1529, and during its seven years of existence it severed connections with Rome. Henry left nothing undone to gain favorable opinions on his divorce from the universities of England and even of France so that he might say that right was on his side. His power, however, was not enough to overbalance that of the empire on the Pope. Therefore, he started out to prove to Rome that he meant business. "The question was far too intimately involved in secular and ecclesiastical politics to be viewed in the dry light of canonical science."¹⁰

Cromwell was Henry's chief aid in the break with Rome. He declared that he would make Henry the most powerful king in Christendom. One thing stood in the way, the church. Therefore, bills were put through Parliament which limited the actions of the clergy in collecting money and selling and buying land. The clergy was indicted under the Statute of Praemunire which prohibited them from recognizing the papal legate, Wolsey. This was unjust because Wolsey had always been the papal legate with Henry's consent. The clergy tried to buy absolution with money, but Henry wanted more than money. He told them that the money could not be accepted unless

10. Ibid., p. 302.

the king was recognized as the head of the Church in England. The convocation of the higher clergy finally accepted and declared Henry VIII the head of the Church in England "as far as the law of Christ allows."¹¹ This is known as the first submission of the clergy, 1531.

In this same year, by the instigation of Cromwell, Parliament petitioned the king to abolish annates and provisions or they would vote to withdraw from Rome.¹² Meanwhile, Henry's diplomatic pressure on the Pope was of no avail. The Pope even issued a letter forbidding Henry to marry, and forbidding anyone else to judge the matter except the Holy See. While Parliament was clamoring against the abuses of the Church Henry duly informed the Pope what Parliament was talking about to incite the Pope against it and to make it appear as if he were being forced into his course of action.

Then came the second submission of the clergy in which Parliament restricted ecclesiastical legislation. Everything passed by convocation would have to have the consent of the King. The Act of the Restraint of Appeals was passed as law, which restricted appeals even of spiritual cases to the crown instead of the Pope. Annates were abolished which left the Pope without any revenue from England. The King was now the head of the Church in England. The divorce case

11. Ibid., p. 308.

12. Ibid., p. 310.

could be tried there without any difficulty as to the outcome. Henry and Anne were married. When Archbishop Warham died in 1533, Henry was conciliatory to the Pope long enough to have Cranmer rightfully appointed as Archbishop. The complete break with Rome came, then, in 1534 with the enforcement of the acts against payments of annates and fees to the Pope. The Act of Supremacy was passed. The King was given the power to appoint all churchmen to their offices in England. All legislative powers of the clergy were broken and the ecclesiastical court system was restricted. Thus Henry put into force all the acts that had been passed. The break was an accomplished fact.

The next step was the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1536 the Act of dissolution was passed by which the smaller houses were dissolved. In 1539 the larger monasteries were dissolved. The monasteries had passed the time of their usefulness. Learning was in the hands of the universities, people were working, and those who depended on charity would now have to work. The monasteries had restricted economic advancement through their landholdings. Their dissolution marks the end of feudalism in England, economically and politically.

**The Break From Rome Was Not Doctrinal
but a Break from Rome's Power**

Henry VIII destroyed the power of the Church in England by abolishing all papal jurisdiction in England and by put-

ting the church under the power of the state. Henry's prime objective was to repudiate, and have his people repudiate, the Pope.¹³ The oath of loyalty to the king was administered to both laity and clergy, universities and convocations. For the most part people and clergy accepted his decrees. Parliament was more concerned about the separation from Rome than with what kind of doctrine would be taught in the church in England. On November 3, 1534, when Parliament finished the legal business of the separation they declared that the king "justly and rightfully is and ought to be supreme head of the Church of England, and to enjoy all honours, dignities, profits, and commodities to the said dignity of Supreme Head of the Church belonging and appertaining."¹⁴

Even, Wolsey, the Archbishop, did not have doctrine in mind when he worked for Henry's divorce. His point of view was that of a politician, not that of a man of religion. He "confined his treatment of the situation within the limits of the work of a politician with educational leanings."¹⁵

The Reformation in England in its beginning had very little change in doctrine, for the reason that that was not its objective. Luther made a revision of doctrine. Henry merely changed the relations between church and state. Luther's was a religious reformation, with some political con-

13. Ibid., p. 341.

14. Ibid., p. 344.

15. A. D. Innes, "England Under the Tudors", p. 95.

sequences. Henry's was a political and economic reconstruction, primarily, which ultimately brought some re-
 formed doctrine.¹⁶ Henry was doing exactly what the Church had done when anyone deviated from its path. He wanted unity of political opinion in England. "The claims of the native state were pitted against those of the universal Church¹⁷ in a conflict unsweetened by conciliation or temperance." Allegiance to the Pope was considered as subversive to the political order of the realm.

Henry VIII did not want to accept Lutheran doctrine or any Confession like the Augsburg Confession because it would ally him with men who believed that it was wrong for him to obtain a divorce from Catherine. This would have tended to destroy his autonomy over the Church of England, and would have been a barrier to political understanding with the Emperor. Therefore, Henry drew up what is known as the Ten Articles. They were to set up the kind of doctrine that was to be taught in England. The articles were conservative, that is to say, they retained almost all the Roman Catholic doctrine. In fact, Protestant teachings spread a little more than Henry wanted. In 1539 Six Articles were drawn up enforcing transubstantiation, celibacy, monastic vows and other Roman Catholic doctrines. In 1545 there was a prohibition against reading the translations of the Bible. Parliament

16. Ibid., p. 97.

17. H. A. Fisher, op. cit., p. 355.

was given the right to decide on doctrines and dogmas. When Henry VIII died in 1547 the Roman Catholic system of doctrine, liturgy and practice was still intact. Papal power, however, had been abolished in England. It was not until later that changes of doctrine took place in the Church of England under such Protestant rulers as Edward VI, Elizabeth, and James I.

In conclusion, we know that the Reformation in England was not brought about by heretical tendencies on the part of the King. There is no parallel for the situation as it came about in England. Religion went on the same as before among the people. The whole sacramental system was left intact. Yet, there were no bonds or ties with the papal power of Rome. The Reformation in its beginning was not a Protestant movement, such as was taking place in Germany. The economic and political considerations far outweigh any others that might be brought forward as the reason for the break with Rome.

This was an age where authority was considered as important and force was considered necessary to hold that authority. The time was ripe for the break with the papacy. It had proven itself as out-moded and a detriment to any ruler who was subjected to its policies. With the Renaissance movement there was a change from the old to the new, in almost every field of life and endeavor. The feudalism of the Church stood in the way of further development, and therefore, the final outcome had to be a separation from its jurisdiction and power. The Church as it was, constituted a virtual block to

economic and political advancement. Henry VIII simply found the solution to that problem by cutting his country free from the ties that would bind it to a foreign power.

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