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The Church Reform of Henry VIII a Product of the Rennissance

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The Church Reform of Henry VIII a Product of the Renaissance.

A conference paper.

(Concluded.)

Two more points I should like to stress to show how the soil was long prepared for just such a revolt against Rome as the English Reformation brought. As before stated, abuses like the immorality of the clergy and the scandalous indulgence traffic were never so prominent in England as on the Continent. Some one may think of the monasteries; but I shall speak of them later. But there were things that may also be called abuses in the regimen of the Church, which may seem little when we compare them with others, which, however, like a steadily growing toothache, racked the nerves of the people and brought them to the point where they were ready to revolt if it could be done in safety. All over Europe there was a feeling of exasperation because of the Church's increasing interference in daily life. The number of church festivals was increasing; at this time there were some 160 festival-days in the year on which no work was permitted. That put tremendous limitations on the people's earning power. Now, that wasn't so bad as everybody was poor and nobody knew any better nor thought that conditions could be improved. But since the Crusades the standard of living had steadily risen; increased trade brought in many aids to make life more convenient and agreeable and brought to a certain class the wealth to acquire these things; in the growing towns people saw every day what could be made of life if the necessary money could be earned; and the Church said: 160 days in the year belong to me; then you must not work. And from these rules there was no dispensation. The result was great dissatisfaction and much disobedience; especially in the towns these regulations were observed less and less. But that again broke down the general attitude toward the Church. One law on the statute books habitually not observed nor enforced undermines the popular attitude over against all law. So here; non-observance and non-enforcement of this regulation lessened the feeling of reverence toward all other church rules and ordinances.

Another thing: On all these festival-days the diet was severely restricted; many were fast-days. Fasting interfered with work. Moreover, England had turned greatly to sheep-raising; since the beginning of the Hundred Years' War the Enclosures had increased greatly; that helped to put meat on most Englishmen's tables, and they were all becoming, not yet beef-eaters, but meat-eaters, and they didn't like the Church's increasing interference with their table supply. But—and this was worse—dispensations from this rule could be bought; rich men could eat meat at any time. And worst

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of all, monasteries and bishops and archbishops could buy dispensations and eat meat on fast-days; the Church made an ordinance which the people must observe, but the official and presumably holiest representatives of the Church were granted for money a dispensation from this very ordinance.

Little things? Well, such little things, if they occur incessantly, grate more on people's feelings and are apt to arouse greater opposition than large evils of relatively rare occurrence. One of the very first acts passed by Parliament after the separation from Rome had become a matter under consideration — the first act, March 26, 1533, was to declare Henry's marriage with Catherine illegal — was the Act of Heresy, March 30: Speaking against the Pope was not to be regarded as heresy.¹²⁾ That act could not have passed, and with apparently little opposition, had not the old medieval reverence toward the Pope been seriously undermined before. The Bishop of London, writing to Wolsey about the proposal to try his chancellor, Dr. Horsey, for complicity in the supposed murder of Richard Hunne, declared that, if the chancellor "be tried by any twelve men in London, they be so maliciously set *in favorem haereticae pravitatis* that they will cast and condemn any clerk [cleric, clergyman] though he were as innocent as Abel."

This dislike was not confined to the capital. The Parliaments had shown themselves anticlerical long before Henry had thrown off his allegiance to Rome; and Englishmen could find no better term of insult to throw at the Scots than to call them "Pope's men." (Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, II, 319.) This also explains the growing disregard of excommunication. Men fell into church discipline through disregard of one of these obnoxious regulations, were sentenced to do penance, refused to do it, and were excommunicated. Women gossiped over the back-yard fence, got into a fight, were haled into the church court for slander, sentenced to do certain penances, refused, and were excommunicated. I am told that the church records of England are full of such slander cases. There were numbers of such people in most communities running around with the sentence of excommunication hanging over their heads, and nothing apparently happened to them.

All in all, while these things may appear little compared with other abuses, yet the Church made a mistake in insisting on such little things if she desired to maintain her dominance over the English people. All through the period of the Renaissance there was a growing opposition to this moral jurisdiction of the Church, her interference with the daily life of the people.

And then there was that evil which paralyzed the arm of justice

12) Gairdner, p. 146.

in England: Benefit of Clergy. By the Benefit of Clergy any one connected with the clergy was transferred to the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts. The privilege had in the course of time been extended in unbelievable measure. Students in universities could plead Benefit of Clergy; for the test was the ability to read, and any rascal who could patter a verse of the psalms could obtain the removal of his case from a court where he was liable to be hanged to a tribunal which was apt to be far more lenient.¹³⁾ In fact, it did screen clerical murderers and thieves from the salutary rigor of temporal justice. No part of the ecclesiastical court systems was less defensible; yet nothing was more desperately defended by the clergy than this privilege of clerical immunity. Time and again the influence of public opinion through the voice of the lay members of Parliament tried to make some impression on the hoary abuse; in vain;¹⁴⁾ and it became more and more evident that, as long as there was an ecclesiastical majority in the House of Lords, Parliament was unlikely to abolish it.

This should suffice to give us some idea of conditions in England when Henry decided the right time had come to separate the Church of England from the Papacy and practically make it a department of the State. The ground was well prepared; all that was needed was a leader and an appropriate occasion.

The leader was without doubt Henry VIII; at his side Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury since the death of Warham, in 1533, but adviser of the king before that time, and in lesser measure Thomas Cromwell, secretary and later vicegerent of the king.

Henry was merely the leader; behind him stood Parliament and behind it the majority of the English people. It is still held by some that Henry forced his reform measure on England. Such a thing can be done; Philipp II did it in the Spanish Netherlands; Ferdinand II in Austria and Bohemia. But it can be done in only one way: with a large standing army at the king's command. Henry had no standing army. Much is said about the tyranny of the Tudors; yet the Tudors had no army, not even a respectable body-guard. Henry had a hundred men who, loosely speaking, could be called a palace guard.¹⁵⁾ There was no army by which force could be exercised. Nor is there the slightest evidence that the people were ready to rise in revolt against the "force" of the government. The only demonstration against Henry's reform is the so-called Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536; but this came from York, always jealous of Canterbury; far away from London, where the king's measures had been less successful and the feudal nobility was stronger than in the South. In York the agrarian difficulties were greater than in the South; as a matter of

13) Gairdner, p. 42.

15) Pollard, *Henry VIII*, p. 313.

14) Fisher, p. 210.

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fact, some of their demands were political, most of them were agrarian. London looked at the Pilgrimage as a political demonstration, and it found no support.¹⁶⁾

The idea of the tyranny of the Tudors must be ruled out; they governed by the love of their people. The people had the deeply rooted conviction that a strong executive was necessary and that in the face of threatening domestic and foreign dangers the sovereign must be allowed more freedom than they would otherwise grant, more than they did grant to the Stuarts when these dangers were past. The people were not blind to the personal faults of their Tudor rulers; but — they had brought peace after the 150 years of wars that had troubled England before their time; they had brought wealth and an unprecedented prosperity to the land — which indeed was not their doing; economic results have economic causes; but in all times, down to our last election, the people have held the men in power responsible for economic conditions. So not all people liked Henry's private character and life, nor did all of them like all the measures he succeeded in passing; but he was a good king, and his government had good results for English people, and so they were willing to overlook some moral deficiencies. Why, were not even some of these moral deficiencies the result of a desire to promote the welfare of England? Was he not, as he himself told them, willing to put up with the hardships and uncertainties of marrying six women in order to assure to England an undisputed heir to the throne and so prevent recurrence of civil war?

What, now, was the underlying motive that prompted Henry and his associates to take the lead and separate the Church of England from the Papacy and make it subject to the crown? There is of course that high-school text-book motive: Henry fell in love with Anne Boleyn, and since the Pope would not give him a divorce from Catherine, Henry made himself the head of the English Church and then forced it to give him the desired divorce. — Does any one really believe that the English people, the whole three million of them, including Parliament and a great number of highly educated men, were such a lot of silly dupes as to be willing to accept without any apparent opposition such a momentous change, a change that was to affect every phase of their public and private life, simply because a lecherous king wanted a girl and couldn't get her without marrying her? The idea is preposterous. There is of course so much truth in it that the divorce, or, strictly speaking, the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine, formed the occasion, the not unwelcome occasion, to bring the ancient struggle between the English crown and the Papacy to a head and to fight it out to the bitter end.

16) Pollard, p. 353 ff.

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The motive lies in the endeavor to abolish the old medieval feudal system and replace it with, or transform it into, a centralized administration. This had been going on everywhere, but nowhere had it reached such an advanced stage as in England. The reason for this was that certain fortuitous conditions had arisen of which the Tudors took advantage.

We commonly associate feudalism only with the ownership of land. That was included, it is true; but feudalism embraced all human activities, economic, political, judicial, administrative, financial. The economic revolution was complete in England before 1500; any one could own land; any one could buy and sell land; the old land aristocracy was breaking up. Any one had the liberty to occupy himself with any task he pleased; the old guild system was broken up. This change was effected before the Reformation. The accomplishment of the Tudors was the transformation of political, judicial, and administrative feudalism, for which they substituted a centralized legal and government organization. The War of the Roses had wiped out many of the old feudal houses; there were only twenty-nine lay peerages left after the war; the fiefs of the other houses fell back to the king by escheat. Henry VII reissued this land to side-lines of the former peers or to others, with this change: While before this time a peerage included legal jurisdiction and a governmental position, the two were now separated; the new peers, the country gentry, received only the land, but they were neither judges nor officials of the government; they could be appointed either of the two, but possession of the land did not carry with it these offices. Their land was subject to the county courts, which were responsible to the king's Privy Council; and the member of Parliament for the district was elected and added to the House of Commons. This brought England a great deal nearer to the establishment of a centralized government.

But two things were still in the way: the vast estates of the Church and the ecclesiastical courts. The wealth of the Church is variously estimated; guesses run from $\frac{1}{6}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of all the land of England. This land the Church ruled; bishops and archbishops ranked with earls. This land was not subject to the central government nor to government courts; hence the Church governed temporarily at least $\frac{1}{6}$ of all the people of England. They had their own courts, from which appeal could be taken directly to Rome; the king's courts had no jurisdiction there. The Church was conservative, old-fashioned; on all the church property the economic and agricultural revolution was checked. Was it right that the Church controlled all this land and all these people? to be a state within a state? They said this land had come to the Church through bequests of pious people; the government could not take that. But when the land was given to the Church, back in the eighth century or there-

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abouts, it was cheap pasture land; now it had often become valuable city property, filled with people. The Church was too powerful temporarily. Why, even in Parliament the clergy usually outnumbered the lay peers. To get all these people and all this land under the central government, the Church's power had to be destroyed.

Henry VIII continued the centralizing policy of his father until about 1526. By that time everything in England had become well organized under the control of the crown — except the possessions of the Church. There the crown struck a snag. To make the nation strong, the equal of other powers, it should be united under one authority. How was that to be done? Henry's divorce came in as a welcome opportunity to break with Rome and subject the Church of England to the crown. I think we need not speak of the divorce itself; it is probably clear that Henry wanted the divorce for its own sake and sent Wolsey to Rome to get it. It is needless to speculate what Henry would have done had the Pope granted the divorce, which other way might have been found to deprive the Church of its power and wealth in England. Sufficient that he did use this. When Wolsey was unsuccessful, he was retired, not in disgrace,¹⁷⁾ but merely set aside to give place to another man, who had more useful ideas: Thomas Cranmer, who not only advised the king to submit the question of the divorce to the universities, but also, according to a document cited by Baily in his *Life of Fisher*, outlined the whole plan how the king could make himself head of the Church. Cardinal Pole credited Cromwell with having inspired the king with the idea that, if he could not get his way from the Pope, he could abolish papal jurisdiction in England and with it the theoretical exemption of the clergy from the civil power; it was monstrous to have two governments in one country. The king should make himself supreme head of the Church in England, and then it should be treason to withstand his will in any matter. (Gairdner, p. 101.) Looking forward, there seems very little plan to the English Reformation; Henry appears to take each successive step in a haphazard way as conditions seem to indicate. Looking backward, however, over the accomplished fact, there appears to be method in his madness; each successive act appears in its appropriate place in a well-planned scheme of emancipation from Romish influence.

At once steps were taken. The clergy was indicted under the old Statute of Praemunire, which of course was unjust because they had submitted to the Roman legate Wolsey with the king's consent; but it was legal, and the clergy bought absolution with 118,000 pounds and the first submission, 1532, acknowledging that the king is head of the Church "so far as the law of Christ will allow." Parliament

17) Gairdner, p. 95 f. Fisher, p. 305. Pollard, p. 247.

petitioned the king to abolish annates under threat of withdrawing from Rome, and Henry had it reported to Rome that he could hardly restrain his Parliament. But the Pope, practically Charles V's prisoner, now spoke, forbidding Henry to marry without his consent. At the same time the second submission of the clergy was adopted; Parliament restricted the powers of ecclesiastical courts and renewed the Statutes of Mortmain — all this preparatory legislation.

In 1533 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Warham, was obliging enough to die. Henry was very conciliatory to Rome for a while; it was very useful to have an archbishop who was willing to turn with them when the break came; but he had to be consecrated according to all rules and regulations; he had to get his bulls from the Pope. On March 26, 1533, Cranmer's bulls arrived, and now it becomes evident that everything had been prepared before. On that same day Parliament assembles — they must have been standing by in London watchfully waiting — and finds Henry's marriage illegal; on March 30 the Act of Heresy is passed; heresy is to be tried by the archbishop, and no appeal beyond him is permitted; the Act of Submission and of Appeals is passed; the king has become head of the Church by law. In 1534 the Act of Annates was passed; no more revenues for the Pope; also a bill passed for the election of bishops with the approval of the king, without reference to the Pope. Thus the legislative power of the clergy was broken. At the same time the ecclesiastical courts were greatly restricted; they were not destroyed, but their jurisdiction was limited; many things formerly subject to the church courts now came under the common law. No more appeals to Rome; appeals had to be made to the king; really difficult cases were decided by the king's Privy Council. The power of the clergy was broken; they were pressed far into the background; they ceased to be a privileged class.

The next step was to reduce the wealth of the Church. In this connection we note two actions: reduction of the income of the clergy and the dissolution of the monasteries. Basis for the first is again historical research, which showed that the original Church had been poor. When a new clergyman was appointed, not all the land that had belonged to his predecessor was given to him. This was done from top to bottom of the clergy, leaving the ecclesiastical official just enough to live on, sometimes less. The income from the land was paid in money, and the huge imports of silver had lowered the value of money; result: some clergymen were reduced to abject poverty, with the further result that the quality of men in church offices was lowered; the men who were willing to take such posts were often not of the highest character or ability.

Then the dissolution of the monasteries. The reason given for this was that they were bad. No doubt they were. It did not take

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Henry's investigators to show that they were bad; people had known that for centuries. Countless efforts had been made to reform them. Sometimes whole orders had been dissolved; at other times, when a certain set of monks grew too bad, they were removed, sometimes the whole outfit hanged, and a new set put in. So it had long been tried to reform monasticism; but now, as early as 1523, Wolsey had said that the time for reform was past; the only thing to be done was to dissolve them.¹⁸⁾ Why? They had outlived their usefulness; now they were nothing but a sore on the body politic because of their wealth and their political power.

Monasteries had been established as resorts for learning and teaching; the universities and other schools were now answering that purpose better; and besides, the monks had ceased to study and to teach. Monasteries had been posts offering safe quarters to travelers; that was no longer necessary. Monks had been in charge of charity; they still were; but it was indiscriminate charity, and the result was that whole communities gathered around the monasteries, pauperized by their charity, the breeding-places of crime. One of the purposes of dissolving monasteries was to break up these communities and put the people to work.

Catholics still say the monks could not possibly have been as bad as Henry's investigators made them; harsh methods were used to get confessions and not enough time was given to these investigations. That probably is true, though it must be borne in mind that the accusations of Henry's investigators are often misunderstood. Violation of the vow of temperance need not mean that all the monks were habitual drunkards; it often meant that they ate too much and too well, broke fasts, and ate meat when they shouldn't. Now, the king needed no investigators to prove that; all he needed was to look around at a set of two-hundred-pound monks with their fat faces, at the barrels in their cellars, at the silks and satins, the silver and gold, in their equipment. The vow of obedience included obedience to the rules of the monasteries, which made it the monks' duty to study and to teach. The vow of chastity, — well, perhaps the monks were no worse than the secular priests, — one of those doubtful compliments. So perhaps not all of the monks were as bad as it appears from the reports of these investigators. But for every small group of monks there was a much larger group of lay brothers connected with the monasteries; 30 or 40 monks ruled a monastic army of 1,200, monastic employees, farmers, weavers, monastic brewers, etc., who had taken no vows not to break all laws of God and man. These large groups were dangerous to the state; there was no way for the king to get at them to make them behave. So even if the monks were good, conditions were bad.

18) Pollard, p. 338.

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But though the stated cause for the dissolution of the monasteries was that they were bad, that was not the real cause. The true case against the monasteries was that they were no longer necessary; on the contrary, they were too powerful politically, their economic influence was restrictive, they were too rich. The income of the monasteries is given as 140,000 pounds¹⁹⁾ (worth about twelve times as much to-day), of which they spent 6 per cent. on charity. After the Reformation the total income of the entire Church was 23,000 pounds. If the feudalistic system of the Middle Ages was to fall, if a centralized national government was to be organized, the monasteries had to be dissolved. There may be added an additional factor against the monasteries on which some lay great emphasis; I am in doubt whether it weighed heavily. Historical research showed that the monasteries were not Christian in origin at all; they were pagan; they came from the Orient, where there had been monasteries before the Christian era. Hence they were a part of the abominations which the Papacy had foisted on the Church. Therefore they ought to be cleaned out.

So Henry cleaned them out. That he could get some money out of this action did not exactly make him less willing; but I think it should not be held that that was one of his chief reasons. After all, the smallest part of the monks' wealth was in the form of cash, and some of that was used for cathedrals and colleges; the greatest part of their wealth was in land, and Henry got little of that.²⁰⁾ But he did use it to strengthen his party, the lay party, the country gentry, which helped him get his measures through Parliament. And particularly did much of this land go to those who formed what came to be called the Catholic Party, those who were opposed to the Reformation, thereby gaining their support. That's the reason why later on Mary was not successful in turning the clock back and restoring England to the Pope; the Catholic landlords chiefly refused to return the church lands which Henry had granted them.

So in 1536 an act was passed for the dissolution of the smaller monasteries, those whose annual income was less than 200 pounds. In 1539 followed action to dissolve the others. In the forties there were no monasteries left. And that was at the same time the end of feudalism in England. Constitutional and financial details were taken care of by later rulers. But England's economic and political life, her legal, judicial, and administrative system, was modernized centuries before that of any other country in Europe.

And that is the English reformation of Henry. He transformed the medieval, feudal Church of England and destroyed its wealth and power by abolishing all papal jurisdiction, by taking all temporal

19) Fisher, p. 370.

20) Pollard, p. 341.

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jurisdiction away from the clergy and throwing them under the justice of the peace. The result was the supremacy of the State over the Church; the clergy was subjected to Parliament. To this day Parliament claims the right to decide on doctrine and dogma (late evidence of this the submission of the new *Book of Common Prayer* to Parliament and its rejection). Clergy and Convocation were subjected to king; the consent of the king was necessary for all resolutions. The clergy was retired from all influence in politics, Parliament becoming a temporal body. Thus Henry organized the Protestant English Episcopal Church.

That is really all of Henry's reform. It was in no sense doctrinal. In fact, Henry's conclusion was that the doctrines of the primitive Church had hardly been tampered with and that the teachings of the Church should not be changed. I do not say that all who assisted Henry in this reform were of the same opinion. Ever since the days of Bilney there had been Lutherans in England. English humanism went to school in Germany and not in Italy and so was interested in the Bible; hence Henry's ordinances of placing Bibles into the churches. Cranmer no doubt leaned toward Lutheranism; but Cranmer was a politician first of all. While he was with the Wittenberg reformers, he married a Lutheran girl, a niece of Oslander; when Henry in the Six Articles decreed that priests should remain celibate, he dismissed his wife. There was a society of Lutherans in Oxford. There was that little White Horse Inn at Cambridge, which the priests called Germany, where Lutheran sympathizers met; at the same time that house characterizes the Lutheranism of that period; it was so situated that it could be entered from back doors of the university.²¹⁾ The influence that the Lutherans in England had on Henry's reform is very small. Henry was not interested in Luther's teaching at all. His opposition to Luther in the beginning (the *Assertio septem sacramentorum*) was greatly personal; if Luther was right and the Pope was not the head of the Church by divine right, then the Pope had no power of dispensation, and in that case, Henry thought, he was not married to Catherine; and at that time Henry still held he was.²²⁾ After 1527 he was of different opinion, and he made more than one attempt to approach the Wittenberg theologians; but his interest was only political; he wanted the support of the Smalcald League, but was not interested in their teaching. They had broken with Rome, hadn't they? Could they not effect a union for mutual support, irrespective of doctrine? This

21) Gairdner, p. 89.

22) Gairdner, p. 79. Henry had married Catherine of Aragon, the widow of his elder brother Arthur, by dispensation of Pope Julius II.

Luther was not willing to do. (Jacobs, *The Lutheran Movement in England*, chap. 4.)²³)

There is evidence that in Henry's later years Lutheran and, after 1540, Calvinistic preaching spread in England. Therefore Henry, together with Parliament and Convocation, thought it necessary to state officially what the English Church stood for doctrinally. It is to these statements we must now turn to see what Henry's reform had accomplished in the way of a real reformation. G. P. Fisher says in his *History of the Reformation* (p. 325): "[Henry] had attempted to establish an Anglican Church, which should be neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic, but which should differ from the Roman Catholic system only in the article of the Royal Supremacy. His success was remarkable. (321.) There had been no renunciation of Catholic doctrines. The hierarchy still existed as of old, but with the king in the room of the Pope as its earthly head." Let me briefly show that this is true.

As early as 1536 the House of Commons asked for a statement of doctrines "against the evil doctrines disseminated by preachers within the province of Canterbury." The result was the so-called *Ten Articles*, presented by Bishop Fox, who had been at Smalcald, which are sometimes ascribed to the king, sometimes to Cranmer, and are probably the work of all three. These *Ten Articles*, adopted and sent to all preachers, state: The standard of doctrine is the Bible, the three ancient Creeds, and the decrees of the first four councils; there are three sacraments, Baptism, Penance, Lord's Supper; transubstantiation is affirmed; good works as well as faith are necessary for justification; the use of images, auricular confession, and invocation of saints are approved; there is a purgatory, but the Pope has no power to deliver souls from it.²⁴)

23) Fisher, p. 361: The German princes replied that Henry should be defender of their league, but on one condition only: he must accept the *Augsburg Confession*, promote it in his own kingdom, and defend it in a future general council. They repudiated the idea of a political union without a concordat on the essentials of faith. This was the rock upon which all schemes for common action were doomed to founder. Henry replied that "he had been long minded to set forth true and sincere doctrine, but being a king, reckoned somewhat learned, and having also so many learned men in his realm, he could not accept at any creature's hand the observing of his and the realm's faith, the ground whereof is in Scripture." . . . In other words, Henry determined to be master in his own house and to settle the faith of his English Church in his own way. Meanwhile he was well content that those eminent divines, Fox, Heath, and Barnes, should labor for religious concord at Wittenberg and that erudite German doctors should bring their opinions to London, where they could be discussed by English theologians to the confusion of Pope and emperor and with no risk whatever to the autonomy of the English Church.

24) Fisher, p. 391.

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There was great objection to these *Ten Articles*; they were deemed too Protestant. They were based on the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology*; but the hand of the Romanizing emendator is very apparent (see comparison, Jacobs, *l. c.*, p. 90 ff.). The chief objection seems to have been the omission of four of the sacraments. So in 1537 there was published a statement of Anglican dogma known as the *Institution of a Christian Man, or The Bishops' Book*. In this treatise the four sacraments which had been lost in the *Ten Articles* were found again; justification was declared entirely due to Christ's merits, but this did not dispense from the obligation to good works; purgatory was repudiated, but prayers for the departed souls were recommended. This was submitted to the king; but he said he did not have time to examine it; he, however, trusted in the wisdom of the authors of this book and ordered that it be read in the churches for the next three years.²⁵⁾

All of this was, however, recognized as tentative and temporary. In this state of transition and uncertainty the reform party, those who hoped that Henry would free his Church from all the ungodly superstitions of Rome, took new courage, and every shrine that was splintered, every image that was burned, every monastery that was surrendered to the king was hailed as a triumph by this party. Cromwell, the king's vicegerent, leaned greatly toward that party (though he, too, was politician first), and while the king was troubled by a new impending Spanish-French alliance and a possible threat of invasion, Cromwell issued a series of injunctions which appeared to mark advance on the path of a change.

But Henry never wavered in dogma. When the danger of a French invasion was greatest, he had the French king informed that the king of England must not be called a heretic. A certain John Lambert, or Nicholson, a pupil of Bilney, was accused of denying the real presence of Christ's body in the Sacrament, was tried and cross-examined by the king himself, who presided at the trial clothed all in white and himself sentenced him to death by fire. In London a man was hanged for eating meat on Friday. On Good Friday His Majesty crept to the cross devoutly from the chapel and served the priest at Mass, "his own person kneeling on His Grace's knees." And Henry thought it was time to call a halt to all doctrinal perversion. But he was not alone in this. Parliament met in 1539 and after long deliberation passed an act commonly called the *Six Articles*, or the *Bloody Articles*, or the *Whip with Six Strings*; passed it very nearly unanimously.²⁶⁾ And it is for this reason that I shall now cite more liberally from this Act; this represents the consensus of opinion of

25) Fisher, p. 418.

26) Gee and Hardy, p. 303 ff.

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the vast majority of English church people at this time, 1539, when Henry's reform was completed. The six points considered were:—

"First, whether in the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar remaineth, after the consecration, the substance of bread and wine, or no.

"Secondly, whether it be necessary by God's law that all men should be communicated with both kinds, or no.

"Thirdly, whether priests, that is to say, men dedicate to God by priesthood, may by the law of God marry after, or no.

"Fourthly, whether vows of chastity or widowhood made to God advisedly by man or woman be by the law of God to be observed, or no.

"Fifthly, whether private masses stand with the law of God, and be to be used and continued in the Church and congregation of England, as things whereby good Christian people may and do receive both godly consolation and wholesome benefits, or no.

"Sixthly, whether auricular confession is necessary to be retained, continued, used, and frequented in the church, or no."

The result, as stated in the Act, was:—

"After a great and long, deliberate, and advised disputation and consultation, had and made concerning the said Articles, as well by the consent of the king's highness as by the assent of the lords spiritual and temporal and other learned men of his clergy in their Convocation, and by the consent of the Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, it was and is finally resolved, accorded, and agreed in manner and form following, that is to say:—

"First, that in the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar, by the strength and efficacy of Christ's mighty word (it being spoken by the priest), is present really, under the form of bread and wine, the natural body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, conceived of the Virgin Mary; and that after the consecration there remaineth no substance of bread or wine nor any other substance, but the substance of Christ, God and man.

"Secondly, that Communion in both kinds is not necessary *ad salutem* by the law of God to all persons and that it is to be believed, and not doubted of, but that in the flesh, under the form of bread, is the very blood and with the blood, under the form of wine, is the very flesh, as well apart as though they were both together.

"Thirdly, that priests after the order of priesthood received, as afore, may not marry, by the law of God.

"Fourthly, that vows of chastity or widowhood, by man or woman made to God advisedly, ought to be observed by the law of God and that it exempts them from other liberties of Christian people, which without that they might enjoy.

"Fifthly, that it is meet and necessary that private masses be continued and admitted in this the king's English Church and con-

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gregation, as whereby good Christian people, ordering themselves accordingly, do receive both godly and goodly consolations and benefits; and it is agreeable also to God's law.

"Sixthly, that auricular confession is expedient and necessary to be retained and continued, used and frequented, in the Church of God."

Transgression of this Act meant death; denial of the first article, transubstantiation, "shall be adjudged manifest heresy, and every such offender and offenders shall therefore have, and suffer, judgment, execution, pain and pains of death by way of burning; . . . and also shall therefore forfeit and lose to the king's highness, his heirs and successors, all his or their honors, manors, castles, lands, tenements, rents, services, possessions, and all other his or their hereditaments, goods and chattels, terms and freeholds, whatsoever they may be." Those who denied any of the other five articles should be deemed and adjudged felons and should therefore suffer pains of death, as in cases of felony, and should forfeit all their possessions. The same punishment falls on all who by word, writing, printing, ciphering, or otherwise than is above rehearsed, publish, declare, or hold opinion against this Act. Priests who have married before adoption of this act must be divorced; those who refuse to do that or who marry after the date of the Act shall be put to death and the respective women as well. All who after date of the Act refuse, deny, or abstain to be confessed and receive the sacrament shall be imprisoned and fined; second offenders shall be put to death.

It was a ferocious statute; but Gairdner says: "Severe as the law was, it led to but little severity in practise."²⁷) Why not? Fisher says: "The public mind, which had been alarmed by the prospect of a radical change in the creed, derived comfort from the reflection that the faith was now securely guarded against the heretic."²⁸) Only two bishops resigned, Shaxton and Latimer; Cranmer dismissed his wife. Marillac, the French ambassador, wrote home: "The people show great joy at the king's declaration concerning the sacrament, being much more inclined to the old religion than to the new opinions."²⁹) "Moreover," says Gairdner, "it *was* the old religion and in the main the religion of the people which was now protected by such severe penalties. It was the old religion, with the Pope left out."³⁰)

And that is the sum total of Henry's reform. During the last years of his reign the sentiments and convictions of many people, notably of many clergymen, changed; the Bible, authorized by Henry, was spread and read widely and led more and more people to the

27) Page 208.

29) Fisher, p. 438.

28) Fisher, p. 438.

30) Page 208.

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knowledge of the truth; and when Henry died in 1547 and his son Edward was crowned, the Protestant faction felt strong enough to come out into the open and change the doctrinal position of the Church; sad to say, it was not Lutheran, but Calvinistic. But that is a new chapter. Henry's reform really ends with the *Six Articles*.

Was it a real reformation of the Church? Fundamentally nothing was changed in the Church as Church; it was only shorn of its temporal power; the great bulwarks of the Church against which Luther had written so forcibly in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Sacramentalism and Sacerdotalism, still remained. Salvation was still bound to the seven sacraments as the channels through which grace was infused into the Christian heart, enabling him through penance to work his way toward justification. The Mass remained in all its idolatrous glory. The Christian was still bound to seek his God through the ordained priesthood in confession, and without them he had no access to God and heaven. Externally, of course, there was some difference; some of the glaring excrescences of Popery had been lopped off; but the evil tree still remained; how long and it would bring forth the same fruits or others just as bad. One was already in evidence — bloody intolerance. It was a repetition of the Spanish reformation in the last years of the fifteenth century. There Ferdinand and Isabella had made themselves heads of the Church in all but name and set out to reform the Church through the Inquisition. And here Henry's supreme effort was the *Six Articles*. We, of course, view the English Reformation in the light of what happened after Henry; but had the reformation of England stopped there with the work of Henry, what would have been the result? Logically, the story of Spain over again.

And I submit: That was the best the Renaissance could accomplish. Here in England they had not only a free field, but the support of an almost absolute monarch, who was at the same time himself an outstanding humanist. Practically all the things that Erasmus stood for were carried out in Henry's reform. Yet at the end the Church remained what it was. And the poor sin-sick soul of man found no better consolation than before.

To bring about a true reformation of the Church, more was required than all that Renaissance scholars could do. It was necessary that God open men's eyes to the true evil in the Church, work-righteousness, and the only remedy, the Gospel of grace and faith. This He did through Dr. Martin Luther. THEO. HOYER.