

GASQUET
FRANCIS
AIDAN

THE EVE OF THE
REFORMATION

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*The Eve of the Reformation / Studies in the Religious Life and Thought of
the English / people in the Period Preceding the Rejection of the Roman /
jurisdiction by Henry VIII:*

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Francis Aidan Gasquet

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**CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION**

The English Reformation presents a variety of problems to the student of history. Amongst them not the least difficult or important is the general question, How are we to account for the sudden beginning and the ultimate success of a movement which, apparently at least, was opposed to the religious convictions and feelings of the nation at large? To explain away the difficulty, we are asked by some writers to believe that the religious revolution, although perhaps unrecognised at the moment when the storm

first burst, had long been inevitable, and indeed that its issue had been foreseen by the most learned and capable men in England. To some, it appears that the Church, on the eve of the Reformation, had long lost its hold on the intelligence and affection of the English people. Discontented with the powers claimed by the ecclesiastical authority, and secretly disaffected to much of the mediæval teaching of religious truth and to many of the traditional religious ordinances, the laity were, it is suggested, only too eager to seize upon the first opportunity of emancipating themselves from a thraldom which in practice had become intolerable. An increase of knowledge, too, it is supposed, had inevitably led men to view as false and superstitious many of the practices of religion which had been acquiesced in and followed without doubt or question in earlier and more simple days. Men, with the increasing light, had come to see, in the support given to these practices by the clergy, a determination to keep people at large in ignorance, and to make capital out of many of these objectionable features of mediæval worship.

Moreover, such writers assume that in reality there was little or no practical religion among the mass of the people for some considerable time before the outbreak of the religious difficulties in the sixteenth century. According to their reading of the facts, the nation, as such, had long lost its interest in the religion of its forefathers. Receiving no instruction in faith and morals worthy of the name, they had been allowed by the neglect of the clergy to grow up in ignorance of the teachings, and in complete

neglect of the duties, of their religion. Ecclesiastics generally, secular as well as religious, had, it is suggested, forfeited the respect and esteem of the laity by their evil and mercenary lives; whilst, imagining that the surest way to preserve the remnants of their former power was to keep the people ignorant, they had opposed the literary revival of the fifteenth century by every means at their command. In a word, the picture of the pre-Reformation Church ordinarily drawn for us is that of a system honeycombed with disaffection and unbelief, the natural and necessary outcome of an attempt to maintain at all hazards an effete ecclesiastical organisation, which clung with the tenacity of despair to doctrines and observances which the world at large had ceased to accept as true, or to observe as any part of its reasonable service.

In view of these and similar assertions, it is of interest and importance to ascertain, if possible, what really was the position of the Church in the eyes of the nation at large on the eve of the Reformation, to understand the attitude of men's minds to the system as they knew it, and to discover, as far as may be, what in regard to religion they were doing and saying and thinking about, when the change came upon them. It is precisely this information which it has hitherto been difficult to get, and the present work is designed to supply some evidence on these matters. It does not pretend in any sense to be a history of the English Reformation, to give any consecutive narrative of the religious movements in this country during the sixteenth century, or to furnish an

adequate account of the causes which led up to them. The volume in reality presents to the reader merely a series of separate studies which, whilst joined together by a certain connecting thread, must not be taken as claiming to present any complete picture of the period immediately preceding the Reformation, still less of that movement itself.

This is intentional. Those who know most about this portion of our national history will best understand how impossible it is as yet for any one, however well informed, to write the history of the Reformation itself or to draw for us any detailed and accurate picture of the age that went before that great event, and is supposed by some to have led up to it. The student of this great social and religious movement must at present be content to address himself to the necessary work of sifting and examining the many new sources of information which the researches of late years have opened out to the inquirer. For example, what a vast field of work is not supplied by the *Calendar of Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII.* alone! In many ways this monumental work may well be considered one of the greatest literary achievements of the age. It furnishes the student of this portion of our national history with a vast catalogue of material, all of which must be examined, weighed, and arranged, before it is possible to pass a judgment upon the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. And, though obviously affording grounds for a reconsideration of many of the conclusions previously formed in regard to this perplexing

period, it must in no sense be regarded as even an exhaustive calendar of the available material. Rolls, records, and documents of all kinds exist in public and private archives, which are not included in these State Papers, but which are equally necessary for the formation of a sound and reliable opinion on the whole story. Besides this vast mass of material, the entire literature of the period demands careful examination, as it must clearly throw great light on the tone and temper of men's minds, and reveal the origin and growth of popular views and opinions.

Writers, such as Burnet, for example, and others, have indeed presented their readers with the story of the Reformation as a whole, and have not hesitated to set out at length, and with assurance, the causes which led up to that event. Whether true or false, they have made their synthesis, and taking a comprehensive view of the entire subject, they have rendered their story more plausible by the unity of idea it was designed to illustrate and confirm. The real value of such a synthesis, however, must of course entirely depend on the data upon which it rests. The opening up of new sources of information and the examination of old sources in the critical spirit now demanded in all historical investigations have fully proved, however, not merely this or that fact to be wrong, but that whole lines of argument are without justification, and general deductions without reasonable basis. In other words, the old synthesis has been founded upon false facts and false inferences.

Whilst, however, seeing that the old story of the Reformation

in England is wrong on some of the main lines upon which it depended, it is for reasons just stated impossible at present to substitute a new synthesis for the old. However unsatisfactory it may appear to be reduced to the analysis of sources and the examination of details, nothing more can safely be attempted at the present time. A general view cannot be taken until the items that compose it have been proved and tested and found correct. Till such time a provisional appreciation at best of the general subject is alone possible. The present volume then is occupied solely with some details, and I have endeavoured mainly by an examination of the literature of the period in question to gather some evidence of the mental attitude of the English people towards the religious system which prevailed before the rejection of the Roman jurisdiction by Henry VIII.

In regard to the general question, one or two observations may be premised.

At the outset it may be allowed that in many things there was need of reform in its truest sense. This was recognised by the best and most staunch sons of Holy Church; and the Council of Trent itself, when we read its decrees and measure its language, is sufficient proof that by the highest authorities it was acknowledged that every effort must be made to purify the Church from abuses, superstitions, and scandals which, in the course of the long ages of its existence, had sprung from its contact with the world and through the human weaknesses of its rulers and ministers. In reality, however, the movement

for reform did not in any way begin with Trent, nor was it the mere outcome of a terror inspired by the wholesale defection of nations under the influence of the Lutheran Reformation. The need had long been acknowledged by the best and most devoted sons of the Church. There were those, whom M. Eugène Müntz has designated the “morose cardinals,” who saw whither things were tending, and strove to the utmost of their power to avert the impending catastrophe. As Janssen has pointed out, in the middle of the fifteenth century, for instance, Nicholas of Cusa initiated reforms in Germany, with the approval – if not by the positive injunctions – of the Pope. It was, however, a true reform, a reform founded on the principle “not of destruction, but of purification and renewal.” Holding that “it was not for men to change what was holy; but for the holy to change man,” he began by reforming himself and preaching by example. He restored discipline and eagerly welcomed the revival of learning and the invention of printing as the most powerful auxiliaries of true religion. His projects of general ecclesiastical reforms presented to Pius II. are admirable. Without wishing to touch the organisation of the Church, he desired full and drastic measures of “reformation in head and members.” But all this was entirely different from the spirit and aim of those who attacked the Church under the leadership of Luther and his followers. Their object was not the reform and purification of abuses, but the destruction and overthrow of the existing religious system. Before, say, 1517 or even 1521, no one at this period ever

dreamt of wishing to change the basis of the Christian religion, as it was then understood. The most earnest and zealous sons of the Church never hesitated to attack this or that abuse, and to point out this or that spot, desiring to make the edifice of God's Church, as they understood it, more solid, more useful, and more like Christ's ideal. They never dreamt that their work could undermine the edifice, much less were their aims directed to pulling down the walls and digging up the foundations; such a possibility was altogether foreign to their conception of the essential constitution of Christ's Church. To suggest that men like Colet, More, and Erasmus had any leaning to, or sympathy with, "the Reformation" as we know it, is, in view of what they have written, absolutely false and misleading.

The fact is, that round the true history of the Reformation movement in England, there has grown up, as Janssen has shown had been the case in Germany, a mass of legend from which it is often difficult enough to disentangle the truth. It has been suggested, for instance, that the period which preceded the advent of the new religious ideas was, to say the least, a period of stagnation. That, together with the light of what is called the Gospel, came the era of national prosperity, and that the golden age of literature and art was the outcome of that liberty and freedom of spirit which was the distinct product of the Protestant Reformation. And yet what are the facts? Was the age immediately before the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century so very black, and was it the magic genius of Luther

who divined how to call forth the light out of the “void and empty darkness”? Luther, himself, shall tell us his opinion of the century before the rise of Protestantism. “Any one reading the chronicles,” he writes, “will find that since the birth of Christ there is nothing that can compare with what has happened in our world during the last hundred years. Never in any country have people seen so much building, so much cultivation of the soil. Never has such good drink, such abundant and delicate food, been within the reach of so many. Dress has become so rich that it cannot in this respect be improved. Who has ever heard of commerce such as we see it to-day? It circles the globe; it embraces the whole world! Painting, engraving – all the arts – have progressed and are still improving. More than all, we have men so capable, and so learned, that their wit penetrates everything in such a way, that nowadays a youth of twenty knows more than twenty doctors did in days gone by.”¹

In this passage we have the testimony of the German reformer himself that the eve of the Reformation was in no sense a period of stagnation. The world was fully awake, and the light of learning and art had already dawned upon the earth. The progress of commerce and the prosperity of peoples owed nothing to the religious revolt of the sixteenth century. Nor is this true only for Germany. There is evidence to prove that Luther’s picture is as correct in that period for England. Learning, there can be no question, in the fifteenth century, found a congenial soil in

¹ *Opera* (ed. Frankfort), tom. x. p. 56, quoted by Janssen.

this country. In its origin, as well as in its progress, the English revival of letters, which may be accurately gauged by the renewal of Greek studies, found its chief patrons in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries among the clergy and the most loyal lay sons of the Church. The fears of Erasmus that the rise of Lutheranism would prove the death-blow of solid scholarship were literally fulfilled. In England, no less than in Germany, amid the religious difficulties and the consequent social disturbances, learning, except in so far as it served to aid the exigencies of polemics or meet the controversial needs of the hour, declined for well-nigh a century; and so far from the Reformation affording the congenial soil upon which scholarship and letters flourished, it was in reality – to use Erasmus’s own favourite expression about the movement – a “catastrophe,” in which was overwhelmed the real progress of the previous century. The state of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, before and after the period of religious change, is an eloquent testimony as to its effect on learning in general; whilst the differences of opinion in religious matters to which the Reformation gave rise, at once put a stop to the international character of the foreign universities. English names forthwith disappeared from the students’ lists at the great centres of learning in France and Italy, an obvious misfortune, which had a disastrous effect on English scholarship; the opening up of the schools of the reformed churches of Germany in no wise compensating for the international training hitherto received by most English scholars of eminence.

In art and architecture, too, in the second half of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, there was manifested an activity in England which is without a parallel. There never was a period in which such life and energy was displayed in the building and adornment of churches of all kinds as on the very eve of the Reformation. Not in one part of the country only, nor in regard only to the greater churches, was this characteristic activity shown, but throughout the length and breadth of England the walls of our great cathedrals and minsters, and well-nigh those of every little parish church in the land, still bear their testimony to what was done out of love for God's house during the period in question by the English people. Moreover, by the aid of the existing accounts and inventories it can be proved to demonstration that it was a work which then, more than at any other period of our national existence, appealed to the people at large and was carried out by them. No longer, as in earlier times, was the building and beautifying of God's house left in this period to some great noble benefactor or rich landowner. During the fifteenth century the people were themselves concerned with the work, initiated it, found the means to carry it out, and superintended it in all its details.

The same may be said of art. The work of adorning the walls of the churches with paintings and frescoes, the work of filling in the tracery of the windows with pictured glass, the work of setting up, and carving, and painting, and decorating; the making of screens, and stalls, and altars, all during this period, and right

up to the eve of the change, was in every sense popular. It was the people who carried out these works, and evidently for the sole reason because they loved to beautify their churches, which were, in a way now somewhat difficult to realise, the centre no less of their lives than of their religion. Popular art grows, and only grows luxuriantly, upon a religious soil; and under the inspiration of a popular enthusiasm the parish churches of England became, if we may judge from the evidence of the wills, accounts, and inventories which still survive, not merely sanctuaries, but veritable picture galleries, teaching the poor and unlettered the history and doctrine of their religion. Nor were the pictures themselves the miserable daubs which some have suggested. The stained-glass windows were not only multiplied in the churches of England during this period, but by those best able to judge, the time between 1480 and 1520 has been regarded as the golden age of the art; and as regards the frescoes and decorations themselves, there is evidence of the existence in England of a high proficiency, both in design and execution, before the Reformation. Two examples may be taken to attest the truth of this: the series of paintings against which the stalls in Eton College Chapel are now placed, and the pictures on the walls of the Lady Chapel at Winchester, now unfortunately destroyed by the whitewash with which they had been covered on the change of religion. Those who had the opportunity of examining the former series, when many years ago they were uncovered on the temporary removal of the stalls, have testified

to their intrinsic merit. Indeed, they appeared to the best judges of the time as being so excellent in drawing and colour that on their authority they were long supposed to have been the work of some unknown Italian artist of the school of Giotto. By a fortunate discovery of Mr. J. Willis Clarke, however, it is now known that both these and the Winchester series were in reality executed by an Englishman, named Baker.

The same is true with regard to decoration and carving work. In screen-work, the Perpendicular period is allowed to have excelled all others, both in the lavish amount of the ornament as well as in the style of decoration. One who has paid much attention to this subject says: "During this period, the screen-work was usually enriched by gilding and painting, or was 'depensiled,' as the phrase runs, and many curious works of the limner's art may still be seen in the churches of Norfolk and Suffolk. In Sussex, the screens of Brighton and Horsham may be cited as painted screens of beauty and merit, both having been thus ornamented in a profuse and costly manner, and each bore figures of saints in their panels."² The churchwardens' accounts, too, show that the work of thus decorating the English parish churches was in full operation up to the very eve of the religious changes. In these truthful pictures of parochial life, we may see the people and their representatives busily engaged in collecting the necessary money, and in superintending the work of setting up altars and statues and paintings, and in hiring carvers and

² J. L. Andre, in *Sussex Archaeological Journal*, xxxix. p. 31.

decorators to enrich what their ancestors had provided for God's house. It was the age, too, of organ-making and bell-founding, and there is hardly a record of any parish church at this time which does not show considerable sums of money spent upon these. From the middle of the fifteenth century to the period described as "the great pillage," music, too, had made great progress in England, and the renown of the English school had spread over Europe. Musical compositions had multiplied in a wonderful way, and before the close of the fifteenth century "prick song," or part music, is very frequently found in the inventories of our English parish churches. In fact, it has been recently shown that much of the music of the boasted school of ecclesiastical music to which the English Reformation had been thought to have given birth, is, in reality, music adapted to the new English services, from Latin originals, which had been inspired by the ancient offices of the Church. Most of the "prick song" masses and other musical compositions were destroyed in the wholesale destruction which accompanied the religious changes, but sufficient remains to show that the English pre-Reformation school of music was second to none in Europe. The reputation of some of its chief masters, like Dunstable, Tallis, and Bird, had spread to other countries, and their works had been used and studied, even in that land of song, Italy.

A dispassionate consideration of the period preceding the great religious upheaval of the sixteenth century will, it can hardly be doubted, lead the inquirer to conclude that it was

not in any sense an age of stagnation, discontent, and darkness. Letters, art, architecture, painting, and music, under the distinct patronage of the Church, had made great and steady progress before the advent of the new ideas. Moreover, those who will examine the old parish records cannot fail to see that up to the very eve of the changes, the old religion had not lost its hold upon the minds and affections of the people at large. And one thing is absolutely clear, that it was not the Reformation movement which brought to the world in its train the blessings of education, and the arts of civilisation. What it did for all these is written plainly enough in the history of that period of change and destruction.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIVAL OF LETTERS IN ENGLAND

The story of the English literary revival in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is of no little interest and importance. The full history of the movement would form the fitting theme of an entire volume; but the real facts are so contrary to much that is commonly believed about our English renaissance of letters, that some brief account is necessary, if we would rightly understand the attitude of men's minds on the eve of the Reformation. At the outset, it is useful to recall the limits of this English renaissance. Judged by what is known of the movement in Italy, the land of its origin, the word "renaissance" is usually understood to denote not only the adoption of the learning and intellectual culture of ancient Greece and Rome by the leaders of thought in the Western World during the period in question, but an almost servile following of classical models, the absorption of the pagan spirit and the adoption of pagan modes of expression so fully, as certainly to obscure, if it did not frequently positively obliterate, Christian sentiment and Christian ideals. In this sense, it is pleasing to think, the renaissance was unknown in England. So far, however, as the revival of learning is concerned, England bore its part in, if indeed it may not be said to have been in the

forefront of, the movement.

This has, perhaps, hardly been realised as it should be. That the sixteenth century witnessed a remarkable awakening of minds, a broadening of intellectual interests, and a considerable advance in general culture, has long been known and acknowledged. There is little doubt, however, that the date usually assigned both for the dawning of the light and for the time of its full development is altogether too late; whilst the circumstances which fostered the growth of the movement have apparently been commonly misunderstood, and the chief agents in initiating it altogether ignored. The great period of the reawakening would ordinarily be placed without hesitation in post-Reformation times, and writers of all shades of opinion have joined in attributing the revival of English letters to the freedom of minds and hearts purchased by the overthrow of the old ecclesiastical system, and their emancipation from the narrowing and withering effects of mediævalism.

On the assumption that the only possible attitude of English churchmen on the eve of the great religious changes would be one of uncompromising hostility to learning and letters, many have come to regard the one, not as inseparably connected with the other, but the secular as the outcome of the religious movement. The undisguised opposition of the clergy to the "New Learning" is spoken of as sufficient proof of the Church's dislike of learning in general, and its determination to check the nation's aspirations to profit by the general classical revival.

This assumption is based upon a complete misapprehension as to what was then the meaning of the term “New Learning.” It was in no sense connected with the revival of letters, or with what is now understood by learning and culture; but it was in the Reformation days a well-recognised expression used to denote the novel religious teachings of Luther and his followers.³ Uncompromising hostility to such novelties, no doubt, marked the religious attitude of many, who were at the same time the most strenuous advocates of the renaissance of letters. This is so obvious in the works of the period, that were it not for the common misuse of the expression at the present day, and for the fact that opposition to the “New Learning” is assumed on all hands to represent hostility to letters, rather than to novel teachings in religious matters, there would be no need to furnish examples of its real use in the period in question. As it is, some instances taken from the works of that time become almost a necessity, if we would understand the true position of many of the chief actors at this period of our history.

Roger Edgworth, a preacher, for instance, after speaking of

³ The use of the expression “New Learning” as meaning the revival of letters is now so common that any instance of it may seem superfluous. Green, for example, in his *History of the English People*, vol. ii. constantly speaks of it. Thus (p. 81), “Erasmus embodied for the Teutonic peoples the quickening influence of the New Learning during the long scholar-life which began at Paris and ended amidst sorrow at Basle.” Again (p. 84), “the group of scholars who represented the New Learning in England.” Again (p. 86), “On the universities the influence of the New Learning was like a passing from death to life.” Again (p. 125), “As yet the New Learning, though scared by Luther’s intemperate language, had steadily backed him in his struggle.”

those who “so arrogantly glory in their learning, had by study in the English Bible, and in these seditious English books that have been sent over from our English runagates now abiding with Luther in Saxony,” praises the simple-hearted faith that was accepted unquestioned by all “before this wicked ‘New Learning’ arose in Saxony and came over into England amongst us.”⁴

From the preface of *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman*, dated February 1531, it is equally clear that the expression “New Learning” was then understood only of religious teaching. Like the Scribes and Pharisees in the time of Our Lord, the author says, the bishops and priests are calling out: “What ‘New Learning’ is it? These fellows teach new learning: these are they that trouble all the world with their new learning?.. Even now after the same manner, our holy bishops with all their ragman’s roll are of the same sort... They defame, slander, and persecute the word and the preachers and followers of it, with the selfsame names, calling it ‘New Learning’ and them ‘new masters.’”⁵

The same meaning was popularly attached to the words even after the close of the reign of Henry VIII. A book published in King Edward’s reign, to instruct the people “concerning the king’s majesty’s proceedings in the communion,” bears the title, *The olde Faith of Great Brittain and the new learning of England*. It is, of course, true, that the author sets himself to

⁴ *Sermons*. London: Robert Caly, 1557, p. 36.

⁵ *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christ*, sig. Aij.

show that the reformed doctrines were the old teachings of the Christian Church, and that, when St. Gregory sent St. Augustine over into England, “the new learning was brought into this realm, of which we see much yet remaining in the Church at the present day.”⁶ But this fact rather emphasises than in any way obscures the common understanding of the expression “New Learning,” since the whole intent of the author is to show that the upholders of the old ecclesiastical system were the real maintainers of a “New Learning” brought from Rome by St. Augustine, and not the Lutherans. The same appears equally clearly in a work by Urbanus Regius, which was translated and published by

⁶ R. V. *The olde Faith of Great Brittainye, &c.*—The style of the book may be judged by the following passages: — “How say you (O ye popish bishops and priests which maintain Austen’s dampnable ceremonies) — For truly so long as ye say masse and lift the bread and wine above your heads, giving the people to understand your mass to be available for the quick and the dead, ye deny the Lord that bought you; therefore let the mass go again to Rome, with all Austen’s trinkets, and cleave to the Lord’s Supper”... Again: — “Gentle reader: It is not unknown what an occasion of sclander divers have taken in that the king’s majesty hath with his honourable council gone about to alter and take away the abuse of the communion used in the mass... The ignorant and unlearned esteeme the same abuse, called the mass, to be the principal point of Christianity, to whom the altering thereof appears very strange... Our popish priests still do abuse the Lord’s Supper or Communion, calling it still a new name of *Missa* or Mass.” The author strongly objects to those like Bishop Gardiner and Dr. Smythe who have written in defence of the old doctrine of the English Church on the Blessed Sacrament: “Yea, even the mass, which is a derogation of Christ’s blood. For Christ left the sacrament of his body and blood in bread and wine to be eaten and drunk in remembrance of his death, and not to be looked upon as the Israelites did the brazen serpent... Paul saith not, as often as the priest lifts the bread and wine above his shaven crown, for the papists to gaze at.” All this, as “the New Learning” brought over to England by St. Augustine of Canterbury, the author would send back to Rome from whence it came.

William Turner in 1537, and called *A comparison betwene the old learynge and the newe*. As the translator says at the beginning —

“Some ther be that do defye
All that is newe and ever do crye
The olde is better, away with the new
Because it is false, and the olde is true.
Let them this booke reade and beholde,
For it preferreth the learning most olde.”

As the author of the previous volume quoted, so Urbanus Regius compares the exclamation of the Jews against our Lord: “What new learning is this?” with the objection, “What is this new doctrine?” made by the Catholics against the novel religious teaching of Luther and his followers. “This,” they say, “is the new doctrine lately devised and furnished in the shops and workhouses of heretics. Let us abide still in our old faith... Wherefore,” continues the author, “I, doing the office of Christian brother, have made a comparison between the ‘New Learning’ and the olden, whereby, dear brother, you may easily know whether we are called worthily or unworthily the preachers of the ‘New Learning.’ For so did they call us of late.” He then proceeds to compare under various headings what he again and again calls “the New Learning” and “the Old Learning.” For example, according to the former, people are taught that the Sacraments bring grace to the soul; according to the latter, faith alone is needful. According to the former, Christ is present

wholly under each kind of bread and wine, the mass is a sacrifice for the living and the dead, and “oblation is made in the person of the whole church”; according to the latter, the Supper is a memorial only of Christ’s death, “and not a sacrifice, but a remembrance of the sacrifice that was once offered up on the cross,” and that “all oblations except that of our Lord are vain and void.”⁷

In view of passages such as the above, and in the absence of any contemporary evidence of the use of the expression to denote the revival of letters, it is obvious that any judgment as to a general hostility of the clergy to learning based upon their admitted opposition to what was then called the “New Learning” cannot seriously be maintained. It would seem, moreover, that the religious position of many ecclesiastics and laymen has been completely misunderstood by the meaning now so commonly assigned to the expression. Men like Erasmus, Colet, and to a great extent, More himself, have been regarded, to say the least, as at heart very lukewarm adherents of the Church, precisely because of their strong advocacy of the movement known as the literary revival, which, identified by modern writers with the “New Learning,” was, it is wrongly assumed, condemned by orthodox churchmen. The Reformers are thus made the champions of learning; Catholics, the upholders of ignorance, and the hereditary and bitter foes of all intellectual improvement.

⁷ Urbanus Regius, *A comparison betwene the old learnynge and the newe*, translated by William Turner. Southwark: Nicholson, 1537, sig. Aij to Cvij.

No one, however, saw more clearly than did Erasmus that the rise of Lutheran opinions was destined to be the destruction of true learning, and that the atmosphere of controversy was not the most fitting to assure its growth. To Richard Pace he expressed his ardent wish that some kindly *Deus ex machinâ* would put an end to the whole Lutheran agitation, for it had most certainly brought upon the humanist movement unmerited hatred.⁸ In subsequent letters he rejects the idea that the two, the Lutheran and the humanist movements, had anything whatever in common; asserting that even Luther himself had never claimed to found his revolt against the Church on the principles of scholarship and learning. To him, the storm of the Reformation appeared – so far as concerned the revival of learning – as a catastrophe. Had the tempest not risen, he had the best expectations of a general literary renaissance and of witnessing a revival of interest in Biblical and patristic studies among churchmen. It was the breath of bitter and endless controversy initiated in the Lutheran revolt and the consequent misunderstandings and enmities which withered his hopes.⁹

There remains, however, the broader question as to the real position of the ecclesiastical authorities generally, in regard to the revival of learning. So far as England is concerned, their attitude is hardly open to doubt in view of the positive testimony of Erasmus, which is further borne out by an examination of the

⁸ *Opera* (ed. Le Clerc), Ep. 583.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Ep. 751.

material available for forming a judgment. This proves beyond all question, not only that the Church in England on the eve of the change did not refuse the light, but that, both in its origin and later development, the movement owed much to the initiative and encouragement of English churchmen.

It is not necessary here to enter very fully into the subject of the general revival of learning in Europe during the course of the fifteenth century. At the very beginning of that period what Gibbon calls “a new and perpetual flame” was enkindled in Italy. As in the thirteenth century, so then it was the study of the literature and culture of ancient Greece that re-enkindled the lamp of learning in the Western World. Few things, indeed, are more remarkable than the influence of Greek forms and models on the Western World. The very language seems as if destined by Providence to do for the Christian nations of Europe what in earlier ages it had done for pagan Rome. As Dr. Döllinger has pointed out, this is “a fact of immense importance, which even in these days it is worth while to weigh and place in its proper light,” since “the whole of modern civilisation and culture is derived from Greek sources. Intellectually we are the offspring of the union of the ancient Greek classics with Hellenised Judaism.” One thing is clear on the page of history: that the era of great intellectual activity synchronised with re-awakened interests in the Greek classics and Greek language in such a way that the study of Greek may conveniently be taken as representing a general revival of letters.

By the close of the fourteenth century, the ever-increasing impotence of the Imperial sway on the Bosphorus, and the ever-growing influence of the Turk, compelled the Greek emperors to look to Western Christians for help to arrest the power of the infidels, which, like a flood, threatened to overwhelm the Eastern empire. Three emperors in succession journeyed into the Western world to implore assistance in their dire necessity, and though their efforts failed to save Constantinople, the historian detects in these pilgrimages of Greeks to the Courts of Europe the providential influence which brought about the renaissance of letters. "The travels of the three emperors," writes Gibbon, "were unavailing for their temporal, or perhaps their spiritual salvation, but they were productive of a beneficial consequence, the revival of the Greek learning in Italy, from whence it was propagated to the last nations of the West and North."

What is true of Italy may well be true of other countries and places. The second of these pilgrim emperors, Manuel, the son and successor of Palæologus, crossed the Alps, and after a stay in Paris, came over the sea into England. In December 1400 he landed at Dover, and was, with a large retinue of Greeks, entertained at the monastery of Christchurch, Canterbury. It requires little stretch of imagination to suppose that the memory of such a visit would have lingered long in the cloister of Canterbury, and it is hardly perhaps by chance that it is here that half a century later are to be found the first serious indications of a revival of Greek studies. Moreover, it is evident that other

Greek envoys followed in subsequent times, and even the great master and prodigy of learning, Manuel Chrysoloras himself, found his way to our shores, and it is hardly an assumption, in view of the position of Canterbury – on the high-road from Dover to London – to suppose to Christchurch also.¹⁰ It was from his arrival in Italy, in 1396, that may be dated the first commencement of systematic study of the Greek classics in the West. The year 1408 is given for his visit to England.¹¹

There are indications early in the fifteenth century of a stirring of the waters in this country. Guarini, a pupil of Chrysoloras, became a teacher of fame at Ferrara, where he gathered round him a school of disciples which included several Englishmen. Such were Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester;¹² Robert Fleming, a learned ecclesiastic; John Free, John Gundthorpe, and William Gray, Bishop of Ely; whilst another Italian, Aretino, attracted by his fame another celebrated Englishman, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, to his classes. These, however, were individual cases, and their studies, and even the books they brought back, led to little in the way of systematic work in England at the

¹⁰ Remigio Sabbadini, *La Scuola e gli studi di Guarino Guarini Veronese*, pp. 217-18.

¹¹ R. Sabbadini, *Guarino Veronese et il suo epistolario*, p. 57.

¹² The Earl was a confrater and special friend of the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury. In 1468-69, Prior Goldstone wrote to the Earl, who had been abroad “on pilgrimage” for four years, to try and obtain for Canterbury the usual jubilee privileges of 1470. In his Obit in the *Canterbury Necrology* (MS. Arund. 68 f. 45d) he is described as “vir undecumque doctissimus, omnium liberalium artium divinarumque simul ac secularium litterarum scientia peritissimus.”

old classical models. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 gave the required stimulus here, as in Italy. Among the fugitives were many Greek scholars of eminence, such as Chalcocondylas, Andronicus, Constantine and John Lascaris, who quickly made the schools of Italy famous by their teaching. Very soon the fame of the new masters spread to other countries, and students from all parts of the Western World found their way to their lecture-halls in Rome and the other teaching centres established in the chief cities of Northern Italy.

First among the scholars who repaired thither from England to drink in the learning of ancient Greece and bring back to their country the new spirit, we must place two Canterbury monks named Selling and Hadley. Born somewhere about 1430, William Selling became a monk at Christchurch, Canterbury, somewhere about 1448. There seems some evidence to show that his family name was Tyll, and that, as was frequently, if not generally, the case, on his entering into religion, he adopted the name of Selling from his birthplace, some five miles from Faversham in Kent.¹³ It is probable that Selling, after having passed through the claustral school at Canterbury, on entering

¹³ Leland (*De Scriptoribus Britannicis*, 482) calls him Tillœus, and this has been generally translated as Tilly. In the *Canterbury Letter Books* (Rolls Series, iii. 291) it appears that Prior Selling was greatly interested in a boy named Richard Tyll. In 1475, Thomas Goldstone, the warden of Canterbury Hall, writes to Prior Selling about new clothes and a tunic and other expenses "scolaris tui Ricardi Tyll." In the same volume, p. 315, is a letter of fraternity given to "Agnes, widow of William Tyll," and on February 7, 1491, she received permission to be buried where her husband, William Tyll, had been interred, "juxta tumbam sancti Thomæ martyris."

the Benedictine Order was sent to finish his studies at Canterbury College, Oxford. Here he certainly was in 1450, for in that year he writes a long and what is described as an elegant letter as a student at Canterbury College to his Prior, Thomas Goldstone, at Christchurch Canterbury.¹⁴ He was ordained priest, and celebrated his first mass at Canterbury in September 1456.¹⁵

In 1464 William Selling obtained leave of his Prior and convent to go with a companion, William Hadley, to study in the foreign universities for three years,¹⁶ during which time they visited and sat under the most celebrated teachers at Padua, Bologna, and Rome.¹⁷ At Bologna, according to Leland, Selling was the pupil of the celebrated Politian, “with whom, on account of his aptitude in acquiring the classical elegance of ancient tongues, he formed a familiar and lasting friendship.”¹⁸ In 1466 and 1467 we find the monks, Selling and his companion Hadley, at Bologna, where apparently the readers in Greek then were Lionorus and Andronicus,¹⁹ and where, on the 22nd March 1466,

¹⁴ *Canterbury Letters* (Camden Soc.), pp. 13, 15.

¹⁵ C. C. C. C. MS. 417 f. 54d: “Item hoc anno videlicet 6 Kal. Oct. D. Willms Selling celebravit primam suam missam et fuit sacerdos summæ missæ per totam illam ebdomadam.”

¹⁶ *Literæ Cantuarr.* (Rolls Series), iii. 239.

¹⁷ Leland, *De Scriptoribus Britannicis*, p. 482. Cf. also *Canterbury Letters* (Camden Soc.), p. xxvii.

¹⁸ Leland, *ut supra*.

¹⁹ Umberto Dallari, *I rotuli dei Lettori, &c., dello studio Bolognese dal 1384 al 1799*, p. 51.

Selling took his degree in theology, his companion taking his in the March of the following year.²⁰

Of this period of work, Leland says: – “His studies progressed. He indeed imbued himself with Greek; everywhere he industriously and at great expense collected many Greek books. Nor was his care less in procuring old Latin MSS., which shortly after he took with him, as the most estimable treasures, on his return to Canterbury.”²¹

His obituary notice in the Christchurch Necrology recites not only his excellence in learning, classical and theological, but what he had done to make his monastery at Canterbury a real house of studies. He decorated the library over the Priests’ Chapel, adding to the books, and assigned it “for the use of those specially given to study, which he encouraged and cherished with wonderful watchfulness and affection.” The eastern cloister also he fitted with glass and new desks, “called carrels,” for the use of the studious brethren.²²

After the sojourn of the two Canterbury monks in Italy, they returned to their home at Christchurch. Selling, however, did not remain there long, for on October 3, 1469, we find him

²⁰ Serafino Mazzetti, *Memorie storiche sopra l'università di Bologna*, p. 308.

²¹ Leland, *ut supra*.

²² B. Mus. Arundel MS. 68, f. 4. The Obit in Christchurch MS. D. 12, says: “Sacrae Theologiae Doctor. Hic in divinis agendis multum devotus et lingua Graeca et Latina valde eruditus... O quam laudabiliter se habuit opera merito laudanda manifesto declarant.”

setting out again for Rome²³ in company with another monk, Reginald Goldstone, also an Oxford student. This visit was on business connected with his monastery, and did not apparently keep him long away from England, for there is evidence that sometime before the election of Selling to the Priorship at Canterbury, which was in 1472, he was again at his monastery. Characteristically, his letter introducing William Worcester, the antiquary, to a merchant of Lucca who had a copy of Livy's *Decades* for sale, manifests his great and continued interest in classical literature.²⁴

At Canterbury, Selling must have established the teaching of Greek on systematic lines, and it is certainly from this monastic school as a centre, that the study spread to other parts of England. William Worcester, keenly alive to the classical revival, as his note-books show, tells us of "certain Greek terminations as taught by Doctor Selling of Christchurch, Canterbury," and likewise sets down the pronunciation of the Greek vowels with examples evidently on the same authority.²⁵

Selling's long priorship, extending from 1472 to 1495, would

²³ In the Canterbury Registers (Reg. R.) there is a record which evidently relates to Selling's previous stay in Rome as a student. On October 3, 1469, the date of Selling's second departure for Rome, the Prior and convent of Christchurch granted a letter to Pietro dei Milleni, a citizen of Rome, making him a *confrater* of the monastery in return for the kindness shown to Dr. William Selling, when in the Eternal City. This letter, doubtless, Selling carried with him in 1469.

²⁴ *The Old English Bible and other Essays*, p. 306.

²⁵ B. Mus. Cotton MS. Julius F. vii., f. 118.

have enabled him to consolidate the work of this literary renaissance which he had so much at heart.²⁶ The most celebrated of all his pupils was, of course, Linacre. Born, according to Caius, at Canterbury, he received his first instruction in the monastic school there, and his first lessons in the classics and Greek from Selling himself. Probably through the personal interest taken in this youth of great promise by Prior Selling, he was sent to Oxford about 1480. Those who have seriously examined the matter believe that the first years of his Oxford life were spent by Linacre at the Canterbury College, which was connected with Christchurch monastery, and which, though primarily intended for monks, also afforded a place of quiet study to others who were able to obtain admission.²⁷ Thus, in later years, Sir Thomas More, no doubt through his father's connection with the monastery of Christchurch, Canterbury, of which house

²⁶ One of Prior Selling's first acts of administration was apparently to procure a master for the grammar school at Canterbury. He writes to the Archbishop: "Also please it your good faderhood to have in knowledge that according to your commandment, I have provided for a schoolmaster for your gramerscole in Canterbury, the which hath lately taught gramer at Wynchester and atte Seynt Antonyes in London. That, as I trust to God, shall so guide him that it shall be worship and pleasure to your Lordship and profit and encreas to them that he shall have in governance." —*Hist. MSS. Com.* 9th Report, App. p. 105.

²⁷ I. Noble Johnson, *Life of Linacre*, p. 11. Among the great benefactors to Canterbury College, Oxford, was Doctor Thomas Chaundeler, Warden of New College. In 1473, the year after the election of Prior Selling, the Chapter of Christchurch, Canterbury, passed a resolution that, in memory of his great benefits to them, his name should be mentioned daily in the conventual mass at Canterbury, and that at dinner each day at Oxford he should be named as founder.

he was a “confrater,” became a student at the monks’ college at Oxford. In later years Sir Thomas himself, when Chancellor of England, perpetuated the memory of his life-long connection with the monks of Canterbury by enrolling his name also on the fraternity lists of that house.

Linacre, in 1484, became a Fellow of All Souls’ College, but evidently he did not lose touch with his old friends at Canterbury, for, in 1486, Prior Selling being appointed one of the ambassadors of Henry VII. to the Pope, he invited his former pupil to accompany him to Italy, in order to profit by the teaching of the great humanist masters at the universities there. Prior Selling took him probably as far as Florence, and introduced him to his own old master and friend, Angelo Politian, who was then engaged in instructing the children of Lorenzo de Medici. Through Selling’s interest, Linacre was permitted to share in their lessons, and there are letters showing that the younger son, when in after years he became Pope, as Leo X., was not unmindful of his early companionship with the English scholar.²⁸ From Politian, Linacre acquired a purity of style in Latin which makes him celebrated even among the celebrated men of his time. Greek he learnt from Demetrius Chalcocondylas, who was then, like Politian, engaged in teaching the children of Lorenzo de

²⁸ Galeni, *De Temperamentis libri tres*, *Thoma Linacro interpretante*, is dedicated to Pope Leo X., with a letter from Linacre dated 1521. “The widow’s mite was approved by Him whose vicar on earth” Pope Leo is, so this book is only intended to recall common studies, though in itself of little interest to one having the care of the world.

Medici.²⁹

From Florence, Linacre passed on to Rome, where he gained many friends among the great humanists of the day. One day, when examining the manuscripts of the Vatican Library for classics, and engaged in reading the *Phædo* of Plato, Hermolaus Barbarus came up and politely expressed his belief that the youth had no claim, as he had himself, to the title Barbarus, if it were lawful to judge from his choice of a book. Linacre at once, from the happy compliment, recognised the speaker, and this chance interview led to a life-long friendship between the Englishman and one of the great masters of classical literature.³⁰

After Linacre had been in Italy for a year or more, a youth whom he had known at Oxford, William Grocyn, was induced to come and share with him the benefit of the training in literature then to be obtained only in Italy. On his return in 1492, Grocyn became lecturer at Exeter College, Oxford, and among his pupils in Greek were Sir Thomas More³¹ and Erasmus. He was a graduate in theology, and was chosen by

²⁹ G. Lili, *Elogia*, ed. P. Jovii, p. 91.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, lxiii. p. 145.

³¹ Sir Thomas More writing to Colet says: "I pass my time here (at Oxford) with Grocyn, Linacre, and our (George) Lilly: the first as you know the only master of my life, when you are absent; the second, the director of my studies; the third, my dearest companion in all the affairs of life" (J. Stapleton, *Tres Thomæ*, p. 165.) Another constant companion of More at Oxford was Cuthbert Tunstall, one of the most learned men of his day, afterwards in succession Bishop of London and Durham. Tunstall dedicated to More his tract *De arte supputandi*, which he printed at Paris in 1529.

Dean Colet to give lectures at St. Paul's and subsequently appointed by Archbishop Warham, Master or Guardian of the collegiate church of Maidstone.³² Erasmus describes him as "a man of most rigidly upright life, almost superstitiously observant of ecclesiastical custom, versed in every nicety of scholastic theology, by nature of the most acute judgment, and, in a word, fully instructed in every kind of learning."³³

Linacre, after a distinguished course in the medical schools of Padua, returned to Oxford, and in 1501 became tutor to Prince Arthur. On the accession of Henry VIII. he was appointed physician to the court, and could count all the distinguished men of the day, Wolsey, Warham, Fox, and the rest, among his patients; and Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, and Queen Mary among his pupils in letters. In his early life, entering the clerical state, he had held ecclesiastical preferment; in advanced years he received priest's orders, and devoted the evening of his life to a pious preparation for his end.³⁴

Grocyn and Linacre are usually regarded as the pioneers of the revival of letters. But, as already pointed out, the first to cross the Alps from England in search for the new light, to convey it back to England, and to hand it on to Grocyn and Linacre, were William Selling, and his companion, William Hadley. Thus, the real pioneers in the English renaissance were the two monks

³² Reg. Warham, in Knight's *Erasmus*, p. 22 note.

³³ Encyclop. Brit. *sub nomine*.

³⁴ Ibid.

of Christchurch, and, some years after, the two ecclesiastics, Grocyn and Linacre.

Selling, even after his election to the priorship of Canterbury, continued to occupy a distinguished place both in the political world and in the world of letters. He was chosen, though only the fifth member of the embassy sent by Henry VII. on his accession to the Pope, to act as orator, and in that capacity delivered a Latin oration before the Pope and Cardinals.³⁵

He was also and subsequently sent with others by Henry on an embassy to the French king, in which he also fulfilled the function of spokesman, making what is described as “a most elegant oration.”

That as Prior, Selling kept up his interest in the literary revival is clear from the terms of his obituary notice. There exists, moreover, a translation made by him after his return from his embassy to Rome, when he took his youthful protégé, Linacre, and placed him under Chalcocondylas and Politian in Florence, which seems to prove that the renewal of his intimacy with the great humanist masters of Italy had inspired him with a desire to continue his literary work. Even in the midst of constant calls upon him, which the high office of Prior of Canterbury necessitated, he found time to translate a sermon of St. John

³⁵ Ugo Balzani, *Un'ambasciata inglese a Roma*, Società Romana di storia patria, iii. p. 175 *seqq.* Of this an epitome is given in Bacon's *Henry VII.*, p. 95. Count Ugo Balzani says: “Il prior di Canterbury sembra essere veramente stato l'anima dell'ambasciata.” Burchardus, *Rerum Urbanarum Commentarii* (ed. Thuasne), i. p. 257, gives a full account of the reception of this embassy in Rome and by the Pope.

Chrysostom from the Greek, two copies of which still remain in the British Museum.³⁶ This is dated 1488; and it is probably the first example of any Greek work put into Latin in England in the early days of the English renaissance of letters. The very volume (Add. MS. 15,673) in which one copy of this translation is found shows by the style of the writing, and other indications, the Italian influences at work in Canterbury in the time of Selling's succession at the close of the fifteenth century; and also the intercourse which the monastery there kept up with the foreign humanists.³⁷

It is hardly necessary to say more about the precious volumes of the classics and the other manuscripts which Selling collected on his travels. Many of them perished, with that most rare work, Cicero's *De Republica*, in the fire caused by the carelessness of some of Henry VIII.'s visitors on the eve of the dissolution of Selling's old monastery at Canterbury. Some, like the great Greek commentaries of St. Cyril on the Prophets, were rescued half burnt from the flames; "others, by some good chance," says Leland, "had been removed; amongst these were the commentaries of St. Basil the Great on Isaias, the works of

³⁶ Harl. MS. 6237, and Add. MS. 15,673.

³⁷ In the same beautifully written volume is a printed tract addressed to the Venetian Senate in 1471 against princes taking church property. The tract had been sent to the Prior of Christchurch by Christopher Urswick, with a letter, in which, to induce him to read it, he says it is approved by Hermolaus Barbarus and Guarini. Christopher Urswick was almoner to Henry VII., and to him Erasmus dedicated three of his works.

Synesius and other Greek codices.”³⁸ Quite recently it has been recognised that the complete Homer and the plays of Euripides in Corpus Christi College library at Cambridge, which tradition had associated with the name of Archbishop Theodore in the seventh century, are in reality both fifteenth-century manuscripts; and as they formed, undoubtedly, part of the library at Christchurch, Canterbury, it is hardly too much to suppose that they were some of the treasures brought back by Prior Selling from Italy. The same may probably be said of a Livy, a fifteenth-century Greek Psalter, and a copy of the Psalms in Hebrew and Latin, in Trinity College Library.³⁹

Prior Selling’s influence, moreover, extended beyond the walls of his own house, and can be traced to others besides his old pupil, and, as some think, relative, Linacre. Among the friendships he had formed whilst at Padua was that of a young ecclesiastical student, Thomas Langton, with whom he was subsequently at Rome. Langton was employed in diplomatic business by King Edward IV., and whilst in France, through his friendship for Prior Selling, obtained some favour from the French king for the monastery of Canterbury. In return for this the monks offered him a living in London.⁴⁰ Prior Selling, on one occasion at least, drafted the sermon which Dr. Langton was to deliver as prolocutor in the Convocation of the Canterbury

³⁸ Leland, *De Scriptoribus Britannicis*, 482.

³⁹ This information I owe to the kindness of Dr. Montague James.

⁴⁰ *Canterbury Letters* (Camden Soc.), p. xxvii.

Province.⁴¹ In 1483 Langton became Bishop of Winchester, and “such was his love of letters” that he established in his own house a *schola domestica* for boys, and himself used to preside in the evening at the lessons. One youth especially attracted his attention by his music. This was Richard Pace, afterwards renowned as a classical scholar and diplomatist. Bishop Langton recognised his abilities, and forthwith despatched him to Italy, paying all his expenses at the universities of Padua and Rome.⁴² At the former place, he says: “When as a youth I began to work at my humanities, I was assisted by Cuthbert Tunstall and William Latimer, men most illustrious and excelling in every branch of learning, whose prudence, probity, and integrity were such that it were hard to say whether their learning excelled their high moral character, or their uprightness their learning.”⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 36, a letter in which Dr. Langton asks Prior Selling to “attend to the drawing of it.” The draft sermon is in Cleop. A. iii.

⁴² Richard Pace, *De Fructu*, p. 27. The work *De Fructu* was composed at Constance, where Pace was ambassador, and where he had met his old master, Paul Bombasius. He dedicates the tract to Colet, who had done so much to introduce true classical Latin into England, in place of the barbarous language formerly used. The work was suggested to him by a conversation he had in England two years before, on his return from Rome, with a gentleman he met at dinner, who strongly objected to a literary education for his children, on the ground that he disapproved of certain expressions made use of by Erasmus. The tract shows on what a very intimate footing Pace was with Bombasius.

⁴³ *De Fructu*, p. 99. Pace published at Venice in 1522, *Plutarchi Cheronei Opuscula*, and dedicated the work to Bishop Tunstall. He reminds the bishop of their old student days, and says the translation has been examined by their “old master, Nicholas Leonicus.”

At this university he was taught by Leonicus and by Leonicensus, the friend and correspondent of Politian: “Men,” he says, as being unable to give higher praise, “like Tunstall and Latimer.”⁴⁴ Passing on to Bologna he sat at the feet of Paul Bombasius, “who was then explaining every best author to large audiences.” Subsequently, at Rome, he formed a lasting friendship with William Stokesley, whom he describes as “his best friend on earth; a man of the keenest judgment, excellent, and indeed marvellous, in theology and philosophy, and not only skilled in Greek and Latin, but possessed of some knowledge of Hebrew,” whose great regret was that he had not earlier in life realised the power of the Greek language.⁴⁵ At Ferrara, too, Pace first met Erasmus, and he warmly acknowledges his indebtedness to the influence of this great humanist.

In 1509, Richard Pace accompanied Cardinal Bainbridge to Rome, and was with him when the cardinal died, or was murdered, there in 1514. Whilst in the Eternal City, “urged to the study by that most upright and learned man, William Latimer,” he searched the Pope’s library for books of music, and found a great number of works on the subject. The cardinal’s death put a stop to his investigations; but he had seen sufficient to be able to say that to study the matter properly a man must know Greek and get to the library of the Pope, where there were many and the best books on music. “But,” he adds, “I venture to say this, our

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

English music, if any one will critically examine into the matter, will be found to display the greatest subtlety of mind, especially in what is called the introduction of harmonies, and in this matter to excel ancient music.”⁴⁶

It is unnecessary to follow in any detail the story of the general literary revival in England. Beginning with Selling, the movement continued to progress down to the very eve of the religious disputes. That there was opposition on the part of some who regarded the stirring of the waters with suspicion was inevitable. More especially was this the case because during the course of the literary revival there rose the storm of the great religious revolt of the sixteenth century, and because the practical paganism which had resulted from the movement in Italy was perhaps not unnaturally supposed by the timorous to be a necessary consequence of a return to the study of the classics of Greece and Rome. The opposition sprung generally from a misunderstanding, and “not so much from any hostility to Greek itself as from an indifference to any learning.” This Sir Thomas More expressly declares when writing to urge the Oxford authorities to repress a band of giddy people who, calling themselves Trojans, made it their duty to fight against the *Grecians*. It is true also that the pulpit was at times brought into requisition to decry “not only Greek and Latin studies,” but liberal education of any kind.⁴⁷ But, so far as England

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 51. “Quas vocant proportionum inductiones ... antiquitatem superasse.”

⁴⁷ More to the University of Oxford, in Knight's *Erasmus*, p. 31.

is concerned, this opposition to the revival of letters, even on the score of the danger likely to come either to faith or morals, was, when all is said, slight, and through the influence of More, Fisher, and the king himself, easily subdued.⁴⁸ The main fact, moreover, cannot be gainsaid, namely, that the chief ecclesiastics of the day, Wolsey, Warham, Fisher, Tunstall, Langton, Stokesley, Fox, Selling, Grocyn, Whitford, Linacre, Colet, Pace, William Latimer, and Thomas Lupset,⁴⁹ to name

⁴⁸ Bishop Fisher's love and zeal for learning is notorious. He did all in his power to assist in the foundation of schools of sound learning at Cambridge, and especially to encourage the study of Greek. Richard Croke, the protégé of Archbishop Warham and Bishop Fisher, after teaching Greek in 1516 at Leipzig, was sent by Fisher in 1519 to Cambridge to urge the utility of Greek studies at that university. In the *Orationes* he delivered there, after speaking of the importance of Greek for all Biblical study, he says that Oxford had taken up the work with great avidity, since "they have there as their patrons besides the Cardinal (Wolsey), Canterbury (Warham), and Winchester, all the other English bishops except the one who has always been your great stay and helper, the Bishop of Rochester, and the Bishop of Ely." It was entirely owing to Bishop Fisher's generosity, and at his special request, that Croke had gone to Cambridge rather than to Oxford, whither his connection with Warham, More, Linacre, and Grocyn would have led him, in order to carry on the work begun by Erasmus.

⁴⁹ Thomas Lupset was educated by Colet, and learnt his Latin and Greek under William Lilly, going afterwards to Oxford. There he made the acquaintance of Ludovico Vives, and at his exhortation went to Italy. He joined Reginald Pole in his studies at Padua, and on his return, after acting as Thomas Winter's tutor in Paris, he held a position first as a teacher and then in Cardinal Wolsey's household. In his *Exhortation to Young Men*, persuading them to a good life, "written at More, a place of my Lord Cardinal's," in 1529, he gives a charming account of his relation with a former pupil. "It happeneth," he says, "at this time (my heartily beloved Edmund) that I am in such a place where I have no manner of books with me to pass the time after my manner and custom. And though I had here with me plenty of books, yet

only the most distinguished, were not only ardent humanists, but thorough and practical churchmen. Of the laymen, whether foreigners or Englishmen, whose names are associated with the renaissance of letters in this country, such as, for example, the distinguished scholar Ludovico Vives, the two Lillys, Sir Thomas More, John Clement,⁵⁰ and other members of More's family,

the place suffereth me not to spend in them any study. For you shall understand that I lie waiting on my Lord Cardinal, whose hours I must observe, to be always at hand lest I be called when I am not by, which would be straight taken for a fault of great negligence. I am well satiated with the beholding of these gay hangings that garnish here every wall." As a relief he turns to address his young friend Edmund. Probably Edmund doesn't understand his affection, because he had always acted on the principle he has "been taught, that the master never hurteth his scholar more than when he uttereth and sheweth by cherishing and coking the love he beareth to his scholars." Edmund is now "of age, and also by the common board of houseling admitted into the number of men, and to be no more in the company of children," and so now he can make known his affection. "This mind had I to my friend Andrew Smith, whose son Christopher, your fellow, I ever took for my son... If you will call to your mind all the frays between you and me, or me and Smith, you will find that they were all out of my care for 'your manners.' When I saw certain fantasies in you or him that jarred from true opinions, the which true opinions, above all learning, I would have masters ever teach their scholars. Wherefore, my good withipol, take heed of my lesson."

⁵⁰ John Clement, a protégé of Sir Thomas More, was afterwards a doctor of renown not only in medicine but in languages. He had been a member of More's household, which Erasmus speaks of as "schola et gymnasium Christianæ religionis." He is named at the beginning of the *Eutopia*, and Sir Thomas, in writing to Erasmus, says that Linacre declared that he had had no pupil at Oxford equal to him. John Clement translated several ancient Greek authors into Latin, amongst others many letters of St. Gregory Nazianzen and the Homilies of Nicephorus Callistus on the Saints of the Greek Calendar. Stapleton, in his *Tres Thomæ* (p. 250), says he had himself seen and examined with the originals these two voluminous translations at the request of John Clement himself. He had married Margaret, the ward of Sir Thomas More,

there can be no shadow of doubt about their dispositions towards the ancient ecclesiastical régime. A Venetian traveller, in 1500, thus records what he had noticed as to the attitude of ecclesiastics generally towards learning: – “Few, excepting the clergy, are addicted to the study of letters, and this is the reason why any one who has any learning, though he may be a layman, is called a *clerk*. And yet they have great advantages for study, there being two general universities in the kingdom, Oxford and Cambridge, in which there are many colleges founded for the maintenance of poor scholars. And your magnificence (the Doge of Venice) lodged at one named Magdalen, in the University of Oxford, of which, as the founders having been prelates, so the scholars also are ecclesiastics.”

It was in England, and almost entirely among the ecclesiastics of England, that Erasmus found his chief support. “This England of yours,” he writes to Colet in 1498, “this England, dear to me on many accounts, is above all most beloved because it abounds in what to me is the best of all, men deeply learned in letters.”⁵¹ Nor did he change his opinion on a closer acquaintance. In 1517,

and in the most difficult places of his translation he was helped by his wife, who, with the daughters of Sir Thomas, had been his disciple and knew Greek well. Mary Roper, More’s granddaughter, and the daughter of Margaret Roper, translated Eusebius’s *History* from Greek into Latin, but it was never published, because Bishop Christopherson had been at work on a similar translation. On the change of religion in Elizabeth’s reign, John Clement and his wife, with the Ropers, took refuge in the Low Countries. Paulus Jovius, in his *Descriptio Britanniae*, p. 13, speaks of all three daughters of Sir Thomas More being celebrated for their knowledge of Latin.

⁵¹ Erasmi *Opera* (ed. 1703), Col. 40.

to Richard Pace he wrote from Louvain in regret at leaving a country which he had come to regard as the best hope of the literary revival: – “Oh, how truly happy is your land of England, the seat and stronghold of the best studies and the highest virtue! I congratulate you, my friend Pace, on having such a king, and I congratulate the king whose country is rendered illustrious by so many brilliant men of ability. On both scores I congratulate this England of yours, for though fortunate for many other reasons, on this score no other land can compete with it.”⁵²

When William Latimer said in 1518 that Bishop Fisher wished to study Greek for Biblical purposes, and that he thought of trying to get a master from Italy, Erasmus, whilst applauding the bishop’s intention as likely to encourage younger men to take up the study, told Latimer that such men were not easy to find in Italy. “If I may openly say my mind,” he adds, “if I had Linacre, or Tunstall, for a master (for of yourself I say nothing), I would not wish for any Italian.”⁵³

Not to go into more lengthy details, there is, it must be admitted, abundant evidence to show that there was in the religious houses of England, no less than in the universities, a stirring of the waters, and a readiness to profit by the real advance made in education and scholarship. The name of Prior Charnock, the friend of Colet and Erasmus at Oxford, is known to all. But there are others with even greater claim than he

⁵² Ibid., Ep. 241.

⁵³ Ibid., Ep. 363.

to be considered leaders in the movement. There is distinct evidence of scholarship at Reading, at Ramsey, at Glastonbury, and elsewhere.⁵⁴ The last-named house, Glastonbury, was ruled by Abbot Bere, to whose criticism Erasmus desired to submit his translation of the New Testament from the Greek. Bere himself had passed some time, with distinction, in Italy, had been sent on more than one embassy by the king, and had been chosen by Henry VII. to invest the Duke of Urbino with the Order of the Garter, and to make the required oration on that occasion.⁵⁵ He had given other evidence also of the way the new spirit that had been enkindled in Italy had entered into his soul. It was through Abbot Bere's generosity that Richard Pace, whom Erasmus calls "the half of his soul," was enabled to pursue his studies in Italy.⁵⁶ Glastonbury was apparently a soil well prepared for the seed-time, for even in the days of Abbot Bere's predecessor, Abbot John Selwood, there is evidence to show that the religious were not altogether out of touch with the movement. The abbot himself presented one of the monks with

⁵⁴ To take one example, Thomas Millyng, who as Bishop of Hereford died in 1492, had studied at Gloucester Hall, Oxford, as a monk of Westminster. During the old age of Abbot Fleet, of Westminster, he governed the monastery, and became its abbot in 1465. He was noted for his love of studies, and especially for his knowledge of Greek. This, says the writer of his brief life in the *National Biographical Dictionary*, was "a rare accomplishment for *monks* in those days." He might have added, and for any one else!

⁵⁵ Dennistoun, *Memorials of the Dukes of Urbino*, iii., pp. 415 *seqq.*

⁵⁶ Erasmus to Abbot Bere. *Opera*, Ep. 700.

a copy of John Free's translation from the Greek of *Synesius de laude Calvitii*. The volume is written by an Italian scribe, and contains in the introductory matter a letter to the translator from Omnibonus Leonicensis, dated at Vicenza in 1461, as well as a preface or letter by Free to John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester.⁵⁷

At St. Augustine's, Canterbury, also, we find, even amid the ruins of its desolation, traces of the same spirit which pervaded the neighbouring cloister of Christchurch. The antiquary Twyne declares that he had been intimately acquainted with the last abbot, whom he knew to have been deeply interested in the literary movement. He describes his friend as often manifesting in conversation his interest in and knowledge of the ancient classical authors. He says that this monk was the personal friend of Ludovico Vives, and that he sent over the sea one of his subjects at St. Augustine's, John Digon, whom he subsequently made prior of his monastery, to the schools of Louvain, in order that he might profit by the teaching of that celebrated Spanish

⁵⁷ MS. Bodl. 80. It is the autograph copy of Free, cf. J. W. Williams, *Somerset Mediæval Libraries*, p. 87. It was Abbot Bere who, in 1506, presented John Claymond, the learned Greek scholar, to his first benefice of Westmonkton, in the county of Somerset. In 1516 Claymond became first President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, often after signing himself, *Eucharistiae servus*. Dr. Claymond procured for his college several Greek manuscripts which had belonged to Grocyn and Linacre, which are still possessed by it. At the end of MS. XXIII., which is a volume containing ninety homilies of St. John Chrysostom in Greek, is an inscription stating that this, and MS. XXIV., were copied in the years 1499 and 1500 by a Greek from Constantinople, named John Serbopylas, then living and working at Reading.

humanist.⁵⁸

Beyond the foregoing particular instances of the real mind of English ecclesiastics towards the revival of studies, the official registers of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge furnish us with evidence of the general attitude of approval adopted by the Church authorities in England. Unfortunately, gaps in the Register of Graduates at Oxford for the second half of the fifteenth century do not enable us to gauge the full extent of the revival, but there is sufficient evidence that the renaissance had taken place. In the eleven years, from A.D. 1449 to A.D. 1459, for which the entries exist, the average number of degrees taken by all students was 91.5. From 1506, when the registers begin again, to 1535, when the commencement of operations against the monastic houses seemed to indicate the advent of

⁵⁸ Ludovico Vives had been invited over to England by Cardinal Wolsey to lecture on rhetoric at Oxford. He lived at Corpus Christi College, then ruled by Dr. John Claymond, whom in his tract *De conscribendis Epistolis* he calls his "father." The fame of this Spanish master of eloquence drew crowds to his lectures at the university, and amongst the audience Henry and Queen Katherine might sometimes be seen. For a time he acted also as tutor to the Princess Mary, and dedicated several works to the queen, to whose generosity he says he owed much. He took her side in the "divorce" question, and was thrown into prison for some weeks for expressing his views on the matter. Fisher, More, and Tunstall were his constant friends in England, and of Margaret Roper he writes, "from the time I first made her acquaintance I have loved her as a sister." Among his pupils at Louvain, besides the above-named Canterbury monk, John Digon, he mentions with great affection Nicholas Wotton, whom the antiquary Twyne speaks of as returning to England with Digon and Jerome Ruffaldus, who calls Vives his "Jonathan," and who subsequently became abbot of St. Vaast, Arras.

grave religious changes, the average number of yearly degrees granted was 127. In 1506 the number had risen to 216, and only in very few of the subsequent years had the average fallen below 100. From 108 in 1535, the number of graduates fell in 1536 to only 44; and the average for the subsequent years of the reign of Henry VIII. was less than 57. From 1548 to 1553, that is, during the reign of Edward VI., the average of graduates was barely 33, but it rose again, whilst Mary was on the throne, to 70.

If the same test be applied to the religious Orders, it will be found that they likewise equally profited by the new spirit. During the period from 1449 to 1459 the Benedictine Order had a yearly average of 4 graduates at Oxford, the other religious bodies taken together having 5. In the second period of 1506-1539 the Benedictine graduates number 200, and (allowing for gaps in the register) the Order had thus a yearly average of 6.75, the average of the other Orders during the same period being 5.2. If, moreover, the number of the religious who took degrees be compared with that of the secular students, it will be found that the former seem to have more than held their own. During the time from 1449 to 1459 the members of the regular Orders were to the rest in the proportion of 1 to 9.5. In the period of the thirty years immediately preceding the general dissolution it was as 1 to 9. Interest in learning, too, was apparently kept up among the religious Orders to the last. Even with their cloisters falling on all sides round about them, in the last hour of their corporate existence, that is in the year 1538-39,

some 14 Benedictines took their degrees at Oxford.

In regard to Cambridge, a few notes taken from the interesting preface to a recent “History of Gonville and Caius College” will suffice to show that the monks did not neglect the advantages offered to them in the sister university.⁵⁹ Gonville Hall, as the college was then called, was by the statutes of Bishop Bateman closely connected with the Benedictine Cathedral Priory of Norwich. Between 1500 and 1523 the early bursars’ accounts give a list of “pensioners,” and these “largely consisted of monks sent hither from their respective monasteries for the purpose of study.” These “pensioners paid for their rooms and their commons, and shared their meals with the fellows. All the greater monasteries in East Anglia, such as the Benedictine Priory at Norwich, the magnificent foundation of Bury, and (as a large landowner in Norfolk) the Cluniac House at Lewes, seem generally to have had several of their younger members in training at our college. To these must be added the Augustinian Priory of Westacre, which was mainly frequented (as Dr. Jessopp tells us) by the sons of the Norfolk gentry.”⁶⁰

The Visitations of the Norwich Diocese (1492-1532), edited by Dr. Jessopp for the Camden Society, contain many references to the monastic students at the university. In one house, for example, in 1520, the numbers are short, because “there were three in the university.” In another case, when a religious house

⁵⁹ J. Venn, *Gonville and Caius College* (1349-1897), Vol. I.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

was too poor to provide the necessary money to support a student during his college career, it was found by friends of the monastery, until a few years later, when, on the funds improving, the house was able to meet the expenses. This same house, the Priory of Butley, “had a special arrangement with the authorities of Gonville Hall for the reservation of a suitable room for their young monks.” One object of sending members of a monastery to undergo the training of a university course “was to qualify for teaching the novices at their own house”; for after they have graduated and returned to their monastery, we not infrequently find them described as “*idoneus preceptor pro confratribus*”; “*idoneus pro noviciis et junioribus*,” &c. Moreover, the possession of a degree on the part of a religious, as an examination of the lists will show, often in after life meant some position of trust or high office in the monastery of the graduate.

Nor was the training then received any light matter of form; it meant long years of study, and the possession of a degree was, too, a public testimony to a certain proficiency in the science of teaching. Thus, for example, George Mace, a canon of Westacre, who became a pensioner at Gonville Hall in 1508, studied arts for five years and canon law for four years at the university, and continued the latter study for eight years in his monastery.⁶¹ William Hadley, a religious of the same house, had spent eleven years in the study of arts and theology;⁶² and Richard Brygott,

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶² Ibid., p. 23.

who took his B.D. in 1520, and who subsequently became Prior of Westacre, had studied two years and a half in his monastery, two years in Paris, and seven in Cambridge.⁶³

“With the Reformation, of course, all this came to an end,” writes Mr. Venn, and we can well understand that this sudden stoppage of what, in the aggregate, was a considerable source of supply to the university, was seriously felt. On the old system, as we have seen, the promising students were selected by their monasteries, and supported in college at the expense of the house. As the author of the interesting account of Durham Priory says: “If the master did see that any of them (the novices) were apt to learning, and did apply his book and had a pregnant wit withal, then the master did let the prior have intelligence. Then, straightway after he was sent to Oxford to school, and there did learn to study divinity.”⁶⁴

Moreover, it should be remembered that it was by means of the assistance received from the monastic and conventual houses that a very large number of students were enabled to receive their education at the universities at all. The episcopal registers testify to this useful function of the old religious corporations. The serious diminution in the number of candidates for ordination, and the no less lamentable depletion of the national universities, consequent upon the dissolution of these bodies, attest what had previously been done by them for the education of the pastoral

⁶³ Ibid., p. 21.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. xviii.

clergy. This may be admitted without any implied approval of the monastic system as it existed. The fact will be patent to all who will examine into the available evidence; and the serious diminution in the number of clergy must be taken as part of the price paid by the nation for securing the triumph of the Reformation principles. The state of Oxford during, say, the reign of Edward VI., is attested by the degree lists. In the year 1547 and in the year 1550 no student at all graduated, and the historian of the university has described the lamentable state to which the schools were reduced. If additional testimony be needed, it may be found in a sermon of Roger Edgworth, preached in Queen Mary's reign. Speaking of works of piety and pity, much needed in those days, the speaker advocates charity to the poor students at the two national universities. "Very pity," he says, "moves me to exhort you to mercy and pity on the poor students in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. They were never so few in number, and yet those that are left are ready to run abroad into the world and give up their study for very need. Iniquity is so abundant that charity is all cold. A man would have pity did he but hear the lamentable complaints that I heard lately when amongst them. Would to God I were able to relieve them. This much I am sure of: in my opinion you cannot bestow your charity better." He then goes on to instance his own case as an example of what used to be done in Catholic times to help the student in his education. "My parents sent me to school in my youth, and my good lord William Smith, sometime Bishop of

Lincoln, (was) my bringer up and ‘exhibitour,’ first at Banbury in the Grammar School with Master John Stanbridge, and then at Oxford till I was a Master of Arts and able to help myself.”

He pleads earnestly that some of his hearers may be inspired to help the students in the distress to which they are now reduced, and so help to restore learning to the position from which it had fallen in late years.⁶⁵

Of the lamentable decay of scholarship as such, the inevitable, and perhaps necessary, consequence of the religious controversies which occupied men’s minds and thoughts to the exclusion of all else, it is, of course, not the place here to dwell upon. All that it is necessary to do is to point out that the admitted decay and decline argues a previous period of greater life and vigour. Even as early as 1545 the Cambridge scholars petitioned the king for an extension of privileges, as they feared the total destruction of learning. To endeavour to save Oxford, it was ordered that every clergyman, having a benefice to the amount of £100, should out of his living find at least one scholar at the university. Bishop Latimer, in Edward VI.’s reign, looked back with regret to past times “when they helped the scholars,” for since then “almost no man helpeth to maintain them.” “Truly,” he said, “it is a pitiful thing to see the schools so neglected. Schools are not maintained, scholars have not exhibitions... Very few there be that help poor scholars... It would pity a man’s heart to hear what I hear of the state of Cambridge; what it

⁶⁵ *Sermons* (1557), f. 54.

is in Oxford I cannot tell... I think there be at this day (A.D. 1550) ten thousand students less than there were within these twenty years." In the year 1550, it will be remembered, there was apparently no degree of any kind taken at the university of Oxford.

This fact appears patent on this page of history; that from the time when minds began to exercise themselves on the thorny subjects which grew up round about the "great divorce" question, the bright promises of the revival of learning, which Erasmus had seen in England, faded away. Greek, it has been said, may conveniently stand for learning generally; and Greek studies apparently disappeared in the religious turmoils which distracted England. With Mary's accession, some attempt was made to recover lost ground, or at least re-ignite the lamp of learning. When Sir Thomas Pope refounded Durham College at Oxford under the name of Trinity, he was urged by Cardinal Pole, to whom he submitted the draft of his statutes, "to order Greek to be more taught there than I have provided. This purpose," he says, "I like well, but I fear the times will not bear it now. I remember when I was a young scholar at Eton, the Greek tongue was growing apace, the study of which is now of late much decayed."⁶⁶

The wholesale destruction of the great libraries in England is an indirect indication of the new spirit which rose at this time, and which helped for a time to put an end to the renaissance

⁶⁶ A. Chalmers, *History of the Colleges, &c. of Oxford*, ii. p. 351.

of letters. When Mary came to the throne, and quieter times made the scheme possible, it was seriously proposed to do something to preserve the remnant of ancient and learned works that might be left in England after the wholesale destruction of the preceding years. The celebrated Dr. Dee drew up a supplication to the queen, stating that “among the many most lamentable displeasures that have of late happened in this realm, through the subverting of religious houses and the dissolution of other assemblies of godly and learned men, it has been, and among all learned students shall for ever be, judged not the least calamity, the spoil and destruction of so many and so notable libraries wherein lay the treasure of all antiquity, and the everlasting seeds of continual excellency in learning within this realm. But although in those days many a precious jewel and ancient monument did utterly perish (as at Canterbury that wonderful work of the sage and eloquent Cicero, *De Republica*, and in many other places the like), yet if in time great and speedy diligence be showed, the remnants of such incredible a store, as well of writers theological as in all the other liberal sciences, might yet be saved and recovered, which now in your Grace’s realm being dispersed and scattered, yea, and many of them in unlearned men’s hands, still even yet (in this time of reconciliation) daily perish; and perchance are purposely by some envious person enclosed in walls or buried in the ground.”

The scheme which accompanied this letter in 1556 was for the formation of a national library, into which were to be gathered

the original manuscripts still left in England, which could be purchased or otherwise obtained, or at least a copy of such as were in private hands, and which the owners would not part with. Beyond this, John Dee proposes that copies of the best manuscripts in Europe should be secured. He mentions specially the libraries of the Vatican, and of St. Mark's, Venice, those at Florence, Bologna, and Vienna, and offers to go himself, if his expenses are paid, to secure the transcripts.⁶⁷ The plan, however, came to nothing, and with Mary's death, the nation was once more occupied in the religious controversies, which again interfered with any real advance in scholarship.

One other point must not be overlooked. Before the rise of the religious dissensions caused England to isolate herself from the rest of the Catholic world, English students were to be found studying in considerable numbers at the great centres of learning in Europe. An immediate result of the change was to put a stop to this, which had served to keep the country in touch with the best work being done on the Continent, and the result of which had been seen in the able English scholars produced by that means on the eve of the Reformation.

Taking a broad survey of the whole movement for the revival of letters in England, it would appear then certain that whether we regard its origin, or the forces which contributed to support it, or the men chiefly concerned in it, it must be confessed that to the Church and churchmen the country was indebted for the

⁶⁷ Hearne, *John of Glastonbury*, ii. p. 490; from MS. Cott. Vitellius c. vii.

successes achieved. What put a stop to the humanist movement here, as it certainly did in Germany, was the rise of the religious difficulties, which, under the name of the “New Learning,” was opposed by those most conspicuous for their championship of true learning, scholarship, and education.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO JURISDICTIONS

The Reformation found men still occupied with questions as to the limits of ecclesiastical and lay jurisdiction, which had troubled their minds at various periods during the previous centuries. It is impossible to read very deeply into the literature of the period without seeing that, while on the one hand, all the fundamental principles of the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church were fully and freely recognised by all; on the other, a number of questions, mainly in the broad borderland of debatable ground between the two, were constantly being discussed, and not infrequently gave cause for disagreements and misunderstandings. As in the history of earlier times, so in the sixteenth century ecclesiastics clung, perhaps not unnaturally, to what they regarded as their strict rights, and looked on resistance to encroachment as a sacred duty. Laymen on the other part, even when their absolute loyalty to the Church was undoubted, were found in the ranks of those who claimed for the State power to decide in matters not strictly pertaining to the spiritual prerogatives, but which chiefly by custom had come to be regarded as belonging to ecclesiastical domain. It is the more important that attention should be directed in a special manner to these questions, inasmuch as it will be found,

speaking broadly, that the ultimate success or ill-success of the strictly doctrinal changes raised in the sixteenth century was determined by the issue of the discussions raised on the question of mixed jurisdiction. This may not seem very philosophical, but in the event it is proved to be roughly correct. The reason is not very far to seek. In great measure at least, questions of money and property, even of national interest and prosperity, were intimately concerned in the matter in dispute. They touched the people's pocket; and whether rightly or wrongly, those who found the money wished to have a say in its disposal. One thing cannot fail to strike an inquirer into the literature of this period: the very small number of people who were enthusiasts in the doctrinal matters with which the more ardent reformers occupied themselves.

We are not here concerned with another and more delicate question as to the papal prerogatives exercised in England. For clearness' sake in estimating the forces which made for change on the eve of the Reformation, this subject must be examined in connection with the whole attitude of England to Rome and the Pope in the sixteenth century. It must, consequently, be understood that in trying here to illustrate the attitude of men's minds at this period to these important and practical questions, a further point as to the claims of the Roman Pontiffs in regard to some or all of them has yet to be considered. Even in examining the questions at issue between the authorities – lay and ecclesiastical – in the country, the present purpose is to record

rather than to criticise, to set forth the attitude of mind as it appears in the literature of the period, rather than to weigh the reasons and judge between the contending parties.

The lawyer, Christopher Saint-German, is a contemporary writer to whom we naturally turn for information upon the points at issue. He, of course, takes the layman's side as to the right of the State to interfere in all, or in most, questions which arise as to the dues of clerics, and other temporalities, such as tithes, &c., which are attached to the spiritual functions of the clergy. Moreover, beyond claiming the right for the State so to interfere in the regulation of all temporalities and kindred matters, Saint-German also held that in some things in which custom had given sanction to the then practice, it would be for the good of the State that it should do so. In his *Dyalogue between a Student of Law and a Doctor of Divinity*,⁶⁸ his views are put clearly; whilst the Doctor states, though somewhat lamely perhaps, the position of the clergy.

To take the example of "mortuaries," upon which the Parliament had already legislated to the dismay of some of the ecclesiastical party, who, as it appears, on the plea that the law was unjust and beyond the competence of the State authority, tried in various ways to evade the provisions of the Act, which was intended to relieve the laity of exactions that, as they very

⁶⁸ Saint-German was born 1460. He was employed by Thomas Cromwell on some business of the State, and died in 1540. The *Dyalogue* was printed apparently first in Latin, but subsequently in English. It consisted of three parts (1) published by Robert Wyer, (2) by Peter Treveris, 1531, and (3) by Thomas Berthalet, also in 1531.

generally believed, had grown into an abuse. Christopher Saint-German holds that Parliament was quite within its rights. The State could, and on occasion should, legislate as to dues payable to the clergy, and settle whether ecclesiastics, who claim articles in kind, or sums of money by prescriptive right, ought in fact to be allowed them. There is, he admits, a difficulty; he does not think that it would be competent for the State to prohibit specific gifts to God's service, or to say that only "so many tapers shall be used at a funeral," or that only so many priests may be bidden to the burial, or that only so much may be given in alms. In matters of this kind he does not think the State has jurisdiction to interfere. "But it has," he says, "the plain right to make a law, that there shall not be given above so many black gowns, or that there shall be no herald of arms" present, unless it is the funeral of one "of such a degree," or that "no black cloths should be hung in the streets from the house where the person died, to the church, as is used in many cities and good towns, or the prohibition of such other things as are but worldly pomps, and are rather consolations to the friends that are alive, than any relief to the departed soul." In these and such like things, he says: "I think the Parliament has authority to pass laws, so as to protect the executors of wills, and relieve them from the necessity of spending so much of the inheritance of the deceased man's heirs."⁶⁹

In like manner the lawyer holds that in all strictly temporal matters, whatever privilege and exemption the State may allow

⁶⁹ *Dyalogue, ut sup.*, 3rd part, f. 2.

and has allowed the clergy, it still possesses the radical power to legislate where and when it sees fit. It does not in fact by lapse of time lose the ordinary authority it possesses over all subjects of the realm in these matters. Thus, for example, he holds that the State can and should prohibit all lands in mortmain passing to the Church; and that, should it appear to be a matter of public policy, Parliament might prohibit and indeed break the appropriations of benefices already made to monasteries, cathedrals, and colleges, and order that they should return to their original purposes. "The advowson," he says, "is a temporal inheritance, and as such is under the Parliament to order it as it sees cause." This principle, he points out, had been practically admitted when the Parliament, in the fourth year of Henry IV., cancelled all appropriations of vicarages which had been made from the beginning of Richard II.'s reign. It is indeed "good," he adds, "that the authority of the Parliament in this should be known, and that it should cause them to observe such statutes as are already made, and to distribute some part of the fruits (of the benefices) among poor parishioners according to the statute of the twentieth year of King Richard II."

In the same way, and for similar reasons, Saint-Germain claims that the State has full power to determine questions of "Sanctuary," and to legislate as to "benefit of clergy." Such matters were, he contends, only customs of the realm, and in no sense any point of purely spiritual prerogative. Like every other custom of the realm, these were subject

to revision by the supreme secular authority. "The Pope by himself," he adds, "cannot make any Sanctuary in this realm." This question of "Sanctuary" rights was continually causing difficulties between the lay and the ecclesiastical authorities. To the legal mind the custom was certainly dangerous to the well-being of the State, and made the administration of justice unnecessarily complicated, especially when ecclesiastics pleaded their privileges, and strongly resisted any attempt on the part of legal officials to ignore them. Cases were by no means infrequent in the courts in the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., which caused more or less friction between the upholders of the two views.⁷⁰ To illustrate the state of conflict on this, in itself a very minor matter, a trial which took place in London in the year 1519 is here given in some detail. One John Savage in that year was charged with murder. At the time of his arrest he was living in St. John Street (Clerkenwell), and when brought to trial pleaded that he had been wrongfully arrested in a place of Sanctuary belonging to the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem. To justify

⁷⁰ One of the first Acts of King Henry VII. on his accession, was to obtain from the Pope a Bull agreeing to some changes in the Sanctuary customs. Prior Selling of Canterbury was despatched as King's Orator to Rome with others to Pope Innocent VIII. in 1487, and brought back the Pope's approval of three points in which the king proposed to change these laws. *First*, that if any person in Sanctuary went out at night and committed mischief and trespass, and then got back again, he should forfeit his privilege of Sanctuary. *Secondly*, that though the person of a debtor might be protected in Sanctuary, yet his goods out of the precincts were not so protected from his creditors. *Thirdly*, that where a person took Sanctuary for treason, the king might appoint him keepers within the Sanctuary.

his contention and obtain his liberty, he called on the Prior of the Knights of St. John to maintain his rights and privileges, and vindicate this claim of Sanctuary. The prior appeared and produced the grant of Pope Urban III., made by Bull dated in 1213, which had been ratified by King Henry III. He also cited cases in which he alleged that in the reign of the late King Henry VII. felons, who had been seized within the precincts, had been restored to Sanctuary, and he therefore argued that this case was an infringement of the rights of his priory.

Savage also declared that he was in St. John Street within the precincts of the priory “*pur amendement de son vie, durant son vie,*” when on the 8th of June an officer, William Rotte, and others took him by force out of the place, and carried him away to the Tower. He consequently claimed to be restored to the Sanctuary from which he had been abducted. Chief-Justice Fineux, before whom the prisoner had been brought, asked him whether he wished to “*jeopardy*” his case upon his plea of Sanctuary, and, upon consultation, John Savage replied in the negative, saying that he wished rather to throw himself upon the king’s mercy. Fineux on this, said: “In this you are wise, for the privileges of St. John’s will not aid you in the form in which you have pleaded it. In reality it has no greater privilege of Sanctuary than every parish church in the kingdom; that is, it has privileges for forty days and no more, and in this it partakes merely of the common law of the kingdom, and has no special privilege beyond this.”

Further, Fineux pointed out that even had St. John's possessed the Sanctuary the prior claimed, this right did not extend to the fields, &c., but in the opinion of all the judges of the land, to which all the bishops and clergy had assented, the bounds of any Sanctuary were the church, cloister, and cemetery. Most certain it was that the *ambitus* did not extend to gardens, barns, and stables, and in his (Fineux's) opinion, not even to the pantry and buttery. He quotes cases in support of his opinion. In one instance a certain William Spencer claimed the privilege of Sanctuary when in an orchard of the Grey Friars at Coventry. In spite of the assertion of the guardian that the Pope had extended the privilege to the whole enclosure, of which the place the friars had to recreate themselves in was certainly a portion, the plea was disallowed, and William Spencer was hanged.

In regard to the privilege of the forty days, Fineux declared that it was so obviously against the common good and in derogation of justice, that in his opinion it should not be suffered to continue, and he quoted cases where it had been set aside. In several cases where Papal privileges had been asserted, the judges had held "quant à les Bulles du pape, le pape sans le Roy ne ad power de fayre sanctuarie." In other words, Fineux rejected the plea of the murderer Savage. But the case did not stop here, both the prior and Savage, as we should say, "appealed," and the matter was heard in the presence of Cardinal Wolsey, Fineux, Brudnell, and several members of the inner Star Chamber. Dr. Potkyn, counsel for the Prior of St. John, pleaded the "knowledge

and allowance of the king” to prove the privilege. No decision was arrived at, and a further sitting of the Star Chamber was held on November 11, 1520, in the presence of the king, the cardinal, all the judges, and divers bishops and canonists, as well as the Prior of St. John and the Abbot of Westminster. Before the assembly many examples of difficulties in the past were adduced by the judges. These difficulties they declared increased so as to endanger the peace and law of the country, by reason of the Sanctuaries of Westminster and St. John’s. To effect a remedy was the chief reason of the royal presence at the meeting. After long discussion it was declared that as St. John’s Sanctuary was made, as it had been shown, by Papal Bull, it was consequently void even if confirmed by the king’s patent, and hence that the priory had no privilege at all except the common one of forty days. The judges and all the canonists were quite clear that the Pope’s right to make a Sanctuary had never been allowed in England, and that every such privilege must come from the king. On the other hand, the bishops present and all the clergy were equally satisfied that the general forty days’ privilege belonged by right to every parish church. The Abbot of Westminster then proved by the production of charters and other indubitable evidence that the Sanctuary of Westminster had its origin in the grants of various kings, and had only been blessed by the Pope.

Fineux pointed out that Sanctuary grants had always been made to monasteries and churches “to the laud and honour of

God,” and that it was not certainly likely to redound to God’s honour when men could commit murder and felony, and trust to get into the safe precinct of some Sanctuary; neither did he believe that to have bad houses in Sanctuaries, and such like abuses, was either to the praise of God or for the welfare of the kingdom. Further, that as regards Westminster, the abbot had abused his privileges as to the *ambitus* or precincts which in law must be understood in the restricted sense. The cardinal admitted that there had been abuses, and a Commission was proposed to determine the reasonable bounds. Bishop Voysey, of Exeter, suggested that if a Sanctuary man committed murder or felony outside, with the hope of getting back again, the privilege of shelter should be forfeited; but the majority were against this restriction. On the whole, however, it was determined that for the good of the State the uses of these Sanctuaries should be curtailed, and that none should be allowed in law but such as could show a grant of the privilege from the crown.⁷¹

In the opinion of many, of whom Saint-German was the spokesman, to go to another matter, Parliament might assign “all the trees and grass in churchyards either to the parson, to the vicar, or to the parish,” as it thought fit; for although the ground was hallowed, the proceeds, such as “trees and grass, are mere temporals, and as such must be regulated by the power of the State.”

Moreover, according to the same view, whilst it would be

⁷¹ Robert Keilway, *Relationes quorundam casuum*, f. 188, *seqq.*

outside the province of the secular law to determine the cut of a priest's cassock or the shape of his tonsure, it could clearly determine that no priest should wear cloth made out of the country, or costing above a certain price; and it might fix the amount of salary to be paid to a chaplain or curate.⁷²

There were circumstances, too, under which, in the opinion of Saint-Germain, Parliament not only could interfere to legislate about clerical duties, but would be bound to do so. At the time when he was writing, the eve of the Reformation, many things seemed to point to this necessity for State interference. There were signs of widespread religious differences in the world. "Why then," he asks, "may not the king and his Parliament, as well to strengthen the faith and give health to the souls of many of his subjects, as to save his realm being noted for heresy, seek for the reason of the division now in the realm by diversity of sects and opinions?.. They shall have great reward before God that set their hands to prevent the great danger to many souls of men as well spiritual as temporal if this division continue long. And as far as I have heard, all the articles that are misliked (are aimed) either against the worldly honour, worldly power, or worldly riches of spiritual men. To express these articles I hold it not expedient, and indeed if what some have reported be true, many of them be so far against the truth that no Christian man would hold them to be true, and they that do so do it for some other consideration."⁷³

⁷² *Dyalogue, ut sup.*, f. 12.

⁷³ *Dyalogue*, f. 23.

As an example, our author takes the question of Purgatory, which he believes is attacked because men want to free themselves from the money offerings which belief in the doctrine necessitates. And indeed, “if it were ordained by law,” he continues, “that every curate at the death of any of their parishioners should be bound to say publicly for their souls *Placebo*, *Dirige* and mass, without taking anything for (the service): and further that at a certain time, to be assigned by Parliament, as say, once a month, or as it shall be thought convenient, they shall do the same and pray for the souls of their parishioners and for all Christian souls and for the king and all the realm: and also that religious houses do in like manner, I fancy in a short time there would be few to say there was no purgatory.”⁷⁴

In some matters Saint-German considered that the State might reasonably interfere in regard to the religious life. The State, he thinks, would have no right whatever to prohibit religious vows altogether; but it would be competent for the secular authority to lay down conditions to prevent abuses and generally protect society where such protection was needed. “It would be good,” for example, he writes, “to make a law that no religious house should receive any child below a certain age into the habit, and that he should not be moved from the place into which he had been received without the knowledge and assent of friends.” This would not be to prohibit religious life, which would not be a just law, but only the laying down of conditions. In the fourth year

⁷⁴ Ibid.

of Henry IV. the four Orders of Friars had such a law made for them; “when the four Provincials of the said four Orders were sworn by laying their hands upon their breasts in open Parliament to observe the said statute.”⁷⁵

In the same way the State may, Saint-German thinks, lay down the conditions for matrimony, so long as there was no “interference with the sacrament of marriage.” Also, “as I suppose,” he says, “the Parliament may well enact that every man that makes profit of any offerings (coming) by recourse of pilgrims shall be bound under a certain penalty not only to set up certain tables to instruct the people how they shall worship the saints, but also cause certain sermons to be yearly preached there to instruct the people, so that through ignorance they do not rather displease than please the saints.”⁷⁶

The State “may also prohibit any miracle being noised abroad on such slight evidence as they have been in some places in times past; and that they shall not be set up as miracles, under a certain penalty, nor reported as miracles by any one till they have been proved such in such a manner as shall be appointed by Parliament. And it is not unlikely that many persons grudge more at the abuse of pilgrimages than at the pilgrimages themselves.” Parliament, he points out, has from time to time vindicated its right to act in matters such as these. For example: “To the strengthening of the faith it has enacted that no man shall

⁷⁵ Ibid., f. 23.

⁷⁶ Ibid., f. 21.

presume to preach without leave of his diocesan except certain persons exempted in the statute” (2 Henry IV.).⁷⁷

There are, Saint-German notes, many cases where it is by no means clear whether they are strictly belonging to spiritual jurisdiction or not. Could the law, for example, prohibit a bishop from ordaining any candidate to Holy Orders who was not sufficiently learned? Could the law which exempted priests from serving on any inquest or jury be abrogated? These, and such like matters in the borderland, are debatable questions; but Saint-German makes it clear that, according to his view, it is a mistake for clerics to claim more exemptions from the common law than is absolutely necessary. That there must be every protection for their purely spiritual functions, he fully and cordially admits; but when all this is allowed, in his opinion, it is a grave mistake for the clergy, even from their point of view, to try and stretch their immunities and exemptions beyond the required limit. The less the clergy were made a “caste,” and the more they fell in with the nation at large, the better it would be for all parties in the State.

On the question of tithes, Saint-German took the laymen’s view. To the ecclesiastics of the period tithes were spiritual matters, and all questions arising out of them should be settled by archbishop or bishop in spiritual courts. The lawyer, on the other hand, maintained that though given to secure spiritual services, in themselves tithes were temporal, and therefore should fall under the administration of the State. Who, for example, was

⁷⁷ Ibid., f. 21.

to determine what was payable on new land, and to whom; say on land recovered from the sea? In the first place, according to the lawyer, it should be the owner of the soil who should apportion the payment, and failing him, the Parliament, and not the spirituality.

In another work⁷⁸ Saint-German puts his view more clearly. A tithe that comes irregularly, say once in ten or twenty years, cannot be considered necessary for the support of the clergy. That people were bound to contribute to the just and reasonable maintenance of those who serve the altar did not admit of doubt, but, he holds, a question arises as to the justice of the amount in individual cases. "Though the people be bound by the law of reason, and also the law of God, to find their spiritual ministers a reasonable portion of goods to live upon, yet that they shall pay precisely the tenth part to their spiritual ministers in the name of that portion is but the law of man." If the tithe did not at any time suffice, "the people would be bound to give more" in order to fulfil their Christian duty. Some authority must determine, and in his opinion as a lawyer and a layman, the only authority competent to deal with the matter, so far as the payment of money was concerned, was the State; and consequently Parliament might, and at times ought, to legislate about the payment of tithes.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *A treatyse concerning the power of the clergie and the laws of the realme*. London, J. Godfray.

⁷⁹ *A treatyse, &c., ut supra*, cap. 4.

In a second *Treatise concerning the power of the clergy and the laws of the realm*, Saint-German returns to this subject of the relation between the two jurisdictions. This book, however, was published after Henry VIII. had received his parliamentary title of Supreme Head of the Church, and by that time the author's views had naturally become somewhat more advanced on the side of State power. In regard to the king's "Headship," he declares that in reality it is nothing new, but if properly understood would be recognised as implied in the kingly power, and as having nothing whatever to do with the spiritual prerogatives as such. He has been speaking of the writ, *de excommunicato capiendo*, by which the State had been accustomed to seize the person of one who had been excommunicated by the Church for the purpose of punishment by the secular arm, and he argues that if the Parliament were to abrogate the law, such a change would in no sense be a derogation of the rights of the Church. Put briefly, the principle upon which he bases this opinion is one which was made to apply to many other cases besides this special one. It is this: that for a spiritual offence no one ought in justice to be made to suffer in the temporal order.⁸⁰ Whilst insisting on this, moreover, the lawyer maintained that there were many things which had come to be regarded as spiritual, which were, in reality, temporal, and that it would be better that these should be altogether transferred to the secular arm of the State. Such, for example, were, in his opinion, the proving and administration of

⁸⁰ *A treatyse, &c., ut supra, cap. xii.*

wills, the citation and consideration of cases of slander and libel and other matters of this nature. “And there is no doubt,” he says, “but that the Parliament may with a cause take that power from them (*i. e.* the clergy), and might likewise have done so before it was recognised by the Parliament and the clergy that the king was Head of the Church of England; for he was so before the recognition was made, just as all other Christian princes are in their own realms over all their subjects, spiritual and temporal.”⁸¹

Moreover, as regards this, “it lieth in princes to appease all variances and unquietness that shall arise among the people, by whatsoever occasion it rise, spiritual or temporal. And the king’s grace has now no new authority in that he is confessed by the clergy and authorised by Parliament to be the Head of the Church of England. For it is only a declaration of his first power committed by God to kingly and regal authority and no new grant. Further, that, for all the power that he has as Head of the Church, he has yet no authority to minister any sacraments, nor to do any other spiritual thing whereof our Lord gave power to His apostles and disciples only... And there is no doubt that such power as the clergy have by the immediate grant of Christ, neither the king nor his Parliament can take from them, although they may order the manner of the doing.”⁸²

The question whether for grave offences the clergy could be tried by the king’s judges was one which had long raised bitter

⁸¹ *A treatyse, &c., ut supra*, cap. xii.

⁸² *Ibid.*, cap. xiii.

feeling on the one side and the other. In 1512, Parliament had done something to vindicate the power of the secular arm by passing a law practically confining the immunity of the clergy to those in sacred orders. It ordained "that all persons hereafter committing murder or felony, &c., should not be admitted to the benefit of clergy." This act led to a great dispute in the next Parliament, held in 1515. The clergy as a body resented the statute as an infringement upon their rights and privileges, and the Abbot of Winchcombe preached at St. Paul's Cross to this effect, declaring that the Lords Spiritual who had assented to the measure had incurred ecclesiastical censures. He argued that all clerks were in Holy Orders, and that they were consequently not amenable to the secular tribunals.

The king, at the request of many of the Temporal Lords and several of the Commons, ordered the case to be argued at a meeting held at Blackfriars at which the judges were present. At this debate, Dr. Henry Standish, a Friar Minor, defended the action of Parliament, and maintained that it was a matter of public policy that clerks guilty of such offences should be tried by the ordinary process of law. In reply to the assertion that there was a decree or canon forbidding it, and that all Christians were bound by the canons under pain of mortal sin, Standish said: "God forbid; for there is a decree that all bishops should be resident at their cathedrals upon every festival day, and yet we see the greater part of the English bishops practise the contrary." Moreover, he maintained that the right of exemption of clerks

from secular jurisdiction had never been allowed in England. The bishops were unanimously against the position of Standish, and there can be little doubt that they had put forward the Abbot of Winchcombe to be their spokesman at St. Paul's Cross. Later on, Standish was charged before Convocation with holding tenets derogatory to the privileges and jurisdiction of ecclesiastics. He claimed the protection of the king, and the Temporal Lords and judges urged the king at all costs to maintain his right of royal jurisdiction in the matters at issue.

Again a meeting of judges, certain members of Parliament, and the king's council, spiritual and temporal, were assembled to deliberate on the matter at the Blackfriars. Dr. Standish was supposed to have said that the lesser Orders were not Holy, and that the exemption of clerks was not *de jure divino*. These opinions he practically admitted, saying with regard to the first that there was a great difference between the greater Orders and the lesser; and in regard to the second, "that the summoning of clerks before temporal judges implied no repugnance to the positive law of God." He further partially admitted saying that "the study of canon law ought to be laid aside, because being but ministerial to divinity it taught people to despise that nobler science." The judges decided generally against the contention of the clergy, and they, with other lords, met the king at Baynard's Castle to tender their advice on the matter. Here Wolsey, kneeling before the king, declared "that he believed none of the clergy had any intention to disoblige the prerogative royal, that

for his part he owed all his promotion to his Highness' favour, and therefore would never assent to anything that should lessen the rights of the Crown." But "that this business of conventing clerks before temporal judges was, in the opinion of the clergy, directly contrary to the laws of God and the liberties of Holy Church, and that both himself and the rest of the prelates were bound by their oath to maintain this exemption. For this reason he entreated the king, in the name of the clergy, to refer the matter for decision to the Pope." Archbishop Warham added that in old times some of the fathers of the Church had opposed the matter so far as to suffer martyrdom in the quarrel. On the other hand, Judge Fineux pointed out that spiritual judges had no right by any statute to judge any clerk for felony, and for this reason many churchmen had admitted the competence of the secular courts for this purpose.

The king finally replied on the whole case. "By the Providence of God," he said, "we are King of England, in which realm our predecessors have never owned a superior, and I would have you (the clergy) take notice that we are resolved to maintain the rights of our crown and temporal jurisdiction in as ample manner as any of our progenitors." In conclusion, the Archbishop of Canterbury petitioned the king in the name of the clergy for the matter to rest till such time as they could lay the case before the See of Rome for advice, promising that if the non-exemption of clerks was declared not to be against the law of God, they would willingly conform to the usage of the country.

On this whole question, Saint-German maintained that the clergy had been granted exemption from the civil law not as a right but as a favour. There was, in his opinion, nothing whatever in the nature of the clerical state to justify any claim to absolute exemption, nor was it, he contended, against the law of God that the clergy should be tried for felony and other crimes by civil judges. In all such things they, like the rest of his people, were subject to their prince, who, because he was a Christian, did not, for that reason, have any diminished authority over his subjects. "Christ," he remarks, "sent His apostles," as appears from the said words, "to be teachers in spiritual matters, and not to be like princes, or to take from princes their power."⁸³ Some, indeed, he says, argue that since the coming of our Lord "Christian princes have derived their temporal power from the spiritual power," established by Him in right of His full and complete dominion over the world. But Saint-German not only holds that such a claim has no foundation in itself, but that all manner of texts of Holy Scripture which are adduced in proof of the contention are plainly twisted from their true meaning by the spiritual authority. And many, he says, talk as if the clergy were the Church, and the Church the clergy, whereas they are only one portion, perhaps the most important, and possessed of greater and special functions; but they were not the whole, and were, indeed, endowed with these prerogatives for the use and benefit of the lay portion of Christ's Church.

⁸³ Ibid., cap. vi.

Contrary to what might have been supposed, the difficulty between the clergy and laity about the exemption of clerics from all lay jurisdiction did not apparently reach any very acute stage. Sir Thomas More says that “as for the conventing of priests before secular judges, the truth is that at one time the occasion of a sermon made the matter come to a discussion before the king’s Highness. But neither at any time since, nor many years before, I never heard that there was any difficulty about it, and, moreover, that matter ceased long before any word sprang up about this great general division.”⁸⁴

One question, theoretical indeed, but sufficiently practical to indicate the current of thought and feeling prevalent at the time, was as to the multiplication of holidays on which no work was allowed to be done by ecclesiastical law. Saint-German, in common with other laymen of the period, maintained that the king, or Parliament, as representing the supreme will of the State, could refuse to allow the spiritual authority to make new holidays. About the Sunday he is doubtful, though he inclines to the opinion that so long as there was one day in the week set apart for rest and prayer, the actual day could be determined by the State. The Sunday, he says, is partly by the law of God, partly by the law of man. “But as for the other holidays, these are but ceremonies, introduced by the devotion of the people through the good example of their bishops and priests.” And “if the multitude of the holidays is thought hurtful to the commonwealth, and

⁸⁴ *English Works* (ed. 1557), p. 1017.

tending rather to increase vice than virtue, or to give occasion of pride rather than meekness, as peradventure the synodales and particular holidays have done in some places, then Parliament has good authority to reform it. But as for the holidays that are kept in honour of Our Lady, the Apostles and other ancient Saints, these seem right necessary and expedient.”⁸⁵

In his work, *Salem and Bizance*, which appeared in 1533 as a reply to Sir Thomas More’s *Apology*, Saint-German takes up the same ground as in his more strictly legal tracts. He holds that a distinction between the purely spiritual functions of the clergy and their position as individuals in the State ought to be allowed and recognised. The attitude of ecclesiastics generally to such a view was, perhaps not unnaturally, one of opposition, and where the State had already stepped in and legislated, as for instance in the case of “mortuaries,” their action in trying to evade the prescription of the law, Saint-German declared was doing much harm, in emphasising a needless conflict between the ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction. “As long,” he writes, “as spiritual rulers will pretend that their authority is so high and so immediately derived from God that people are bound to obey them and to accept all that they do and teach without argument, resistance, or murmuring against them” there will be discord and difficulty.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *A treatyse, &c., ut sup.*, cap. vi., sig. E. i.

⁸⁶ *Salem and Bizance, a dialogue betwixte two Englishmen, whereof one was called Salem and the other Bizance* (Berthelet, 1533), f. 76.

Christopher Saint-German's position was not by any means that of one who would attack the clergy all along the line, and deprive them of all power and influence, like so many of the foreign sectaries of the time. He admitted, and indeed insisted on, the fact that they had received great and undoubted powers by their high vocation, having their spiritual jurisdiction immediately from God. Their temporalities, however, he maintained they received from the secular power, and were protected by the State in their possession. He fully agreed "that such things as the whole clergy of Christendom teach and order in spiritual things, and which of long time have been by long custom and usage in the whole body of Christendom ratified, agreed, and confirmed, by the spirituality and temporality, ought to be received with reverence."⁸⁷

To this part of Saint-German's book Sir Thomas More takes exception in his *Apology*. The former had said, that as long as the spiritual rulers will pretend that their authority is so high and so immediately derived from God that the people are bound to obey them and accept all that they do and teach "there would certainly be divisions and dissensions." "If he mean," replies More, "that they speak thus of all their whole authority that they may now lawfully do and say at this time: I answer that they neither pretend, nor never did, that all their authority is given them immediately by God. They have authority now to do divers things by the grant of kings and princes, just as many temporal

⁸⁷ Ibid., f. 84.

men also have, and by such grants they have such rights in such things as temporal men have in theirs.”⁸⁸

Some authority and power they certainly have from God, he says, “For the greatest and highest and most excellent authority that they have, either God has Himself given it to them, or else they are very presumptuous and usurp many things far above all reason. For I have never read, or at least I do not remember to have read, that any king granted them the authority that now not only prelates but other poor plain priests daily take on them in ministering the sacraments and consecrating the Blessed Body of Christ.”⁸⁹

Another popular book of the period, published by Berthelet, just on the eve of the Reformation, is the anonymous *Dialogue between a Knight and a Clerk concerning the power spiritual and temporal*. We are not here concerned with the author’s views as to the power of the Popes, but only with what he states about the attitude of men’s minds to the difficulties consequent upon the confusion of the two jurisdictions. *Miles* (the Knight), who, of course, took the part of the upholder of the secular power, clearly distinguished, like Saint-German, between directly spiritual prerogatives and the authority and position assured to the clergy by the State. “God forbid,” he says, “that I should deny the right of Holy Church to know and correct men for their sins. Not to hold this would be to deny the sacrament

⁸⁸ *English Works*, p. 892.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

of Penance and Confession altogether.”⁹⁰ Moreover, like Saint-German, this author, in the person of *Miles*, insists that the temporality “are bound to find the spirituality that worship and serve God all that is necessary for them. For so do all nations.”⁹¹ But the direction of such temporalities must, he contends, be in the hands of the State. “What,” asks the conservative cleric, in the person of *Clericus*, “What have princes and kings to do with the governance of our temporalities? Let them take their own and order their own, and suffer us to be in peace with ours.”

“Sir,” replies *Miles*, “the princes must in any wise have to do therewith. I pray you, ought not men above all things to mind the health of our souls? Ought not we to see the wills of our forefathers fulfilled? Falleth it not to you to pray for our forefathers that are passed out of this life? And did not our fathers give you our temporalities right plentifully, to the intent that you should pray for them and spend it all to the honour of God? And ye do nothing so; but ye spend your temporalities in sinful deeds and vanities, which temporalities ye should spend in works of charity, and in alms-deeds to the poor and needy. For to this purpose our forefathers gave ‘great and huge dominions.’ You have received them ‘to the intent to have clothes and food ... and all overplus besides these you ought to spend on deeds of mercy and pity, as on poor people that are in need, and on such as are

⁹⁰ *A Dialogue, &c., ut sup.*, f. 8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, f. 11.

sick and diseased and oppressed with misery.”⁹²

Further, *Miles* hints that there are many at that time who were casting hungry eyes upon the riches of the Church, and that were it not for the protecting power of the State, the clergy would soon find that they were in worse plight than they think themselves to be. And, in answer to the complaints of *Clericus* that ecclesiastics are taxed too hardly for money to be spent on soldiers, ships, and engines of war, he tells him that there is no reason in the nature of things why ecclesiastical property should not bear the burden of national works as well as every other kind of wealth. “I pray you hold your noise,” he exclaims somewhat rudely; “stop your grudging and grumbling, and listen patiently. Look at your many neighbours round about you in the land, who, wanting the wherewith to support life, gape still after your goods. If the king’s power failed, what rest should you have? Would not the gentlemen such as be needy, and such as have spent their substance prodigally, when they have consumed their own, turn to yours, and waste and destroy all you have? Therefore, the king’s strength is to you instead of a strong wall, and you wot well that the king’s peace is your peace, and the king’s safeguard is your safeguard.”⁹³

The foregoing pages represent some of the practical difficulties which were being experienced on the eve of the Reformation between the ecclesiastical and lay portion of the

⁹² Ibid., f. 14.

⁹³ *A Dialogue, &c., ut sup.*, p. 17.

State in the question of jurisdiction. Everything points to the fact that the chief difficulty was certainly not religious. The ecclesiastical jurisdiction in matters spiritual was cordially admitted by all but a few fanatics. What even many churchmen objected to, were the claims for exemption put forward by ecclesiastics in the name of religion, which they felt to be a stretching of spiritual prerogatives into the domain of the temporal sovereign. History has shown that most of these claims have in practice been disallowed, not only without detriment to the spiritual work of the Church, but in some instances at least it was the frank recognition of the State rights, which, under Providence, saved nations from the general defection which seemed to threaten the old ecclesiastical system. Most of the difficulties which were, as we have seen, experienced and debated in England were unfelt in Spain, where the sovereign from the first made his position as to the temporalities of the Church clearly understood by all. In Naples, in like manner, the right of State patronage, however objectionable to the ecclesiastical legists, was strictly maintained. In France, the danger which at one time threatened an overthrow of religion similar to that which had fallen on Germany, and which at the time was looming dark over England, was averted by the celebrated Concordat between Leo X. and Francis I. By this settlement of outstanding difficulties between the two jurisdictions, all rights of election to ecclesiastical dignities was swept away with the full and express sanction of the Pope. The

nomination of all bishops and other dignitaries was vested in the king, subject, of course, to Papal confirmation. All appeals were, in the first place, to be carried in ordinary cases to immediate superiors acting in the fixed tribunals of the country, and then only to the Holy See. The Papal power of appointment to benefices was by this agreement strictly limited; and the policy of the document was generally directed to securing the most important ecclesiastical positions, including even parish churches in towns, to educated men. It is to this settlement of outstanding difficulties, the constant causes of friction – a settlement of difficulties which must be regarded as economic and administrative rather than as religious – that so good a judge as M. Hanotaux, the statesman and historian, attributes nothing less than the maintenance of the old religion in France. In his opinion, this Concordat did in fact remove, to a great extent, the genuine grievances which had long been felt by the people at large, which elsewhere the Reformers of the sixteenth century skilfully seized upon, as likely to afford them the most plausible means for furthering their schemes of change in matters strictly religious.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLAND AND THE POPE

Nothing is more necessary for one who desires to appreciate the true meaning of the English Reformation than to understand the attitude of men's minds to the Pope and the See of Rome on the eve of the great change. As in the event, the religious upheaval did, in fact, lead to a national rejection of the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, it is not unnatural that those who do not look below the surface should see in this act the outcome and inevitable consequence of long-continued irritation at a foreign domination. The renunciation of Papal jurisdiction, in other words, is taken as sufficient evidence of national hostility to the Holy See. If this be the true explanation of the fact, it is obvious that in the literature of the period immediately preceding the formal renunciation of ecclesiastical dependence on Rome, evidence more or less abundant will be found of this feeling of dislike, if not of detestation, for a yoke which we are told had become unbearable.

At the outset, it must be confessed that any one who will go to the literature of the period with the expectation of collecting evidence of this kind is doomed to disappointment. If we put on one side the diatribes and scurrilous invectives of advanced reformers, when the day of the doctrinal Reformation had

already dawned, the inquirer in this field of knowledge can hardly fail to be struck by the absence of indications of any real hostility to the See of Rome in the period in question. So far as the works of the age are concerned: so far, too, as the acts of individuals and even of those who were responsible agents of the State go, the evidence of an unquestioned acceptance of the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope, as Head of the Christian Church, is simply overwhelming. In their acceptance of this supreme authority the English were perhaps neither demonstrative nor loudly protesting, but this in no way derogated from their loyal and unquestioning acceptance of the supremacy of the Holy See. History shows that up to the very eve of the rejection of this supremacy the attitude of Englishmen, in spite of difficulties and misunderstandings, had been persistently one of respect for the Pope as their spiritual head. Whilst other nations of Christendom had been in the past centuries engaged in endeavours by diplomacy, and even by force of arms, to capture the Pope that they might use him for their own national profit, England, with nothing to gain, expecting nothing, seeking nothing, had never entered on that line of policy, but had been content to bow to his authority as to that of the appointed Head of Christ's Church on earth. Of this much there can be no doubt. They did not reason about it, nor sift and sort the grounds of their acceptance, any more than a child would dream of searching into, or philosophising upon, the obedience he freely gives to his parents.

That there were at times disagreements and quarrels may be admitted without in the least affecting the real attitude and uninterrupted spiritual dependence of England on the Holy See. Such disputes were wholly the outcome of misunderstandings as to matters in the domain rather of the temporal than of the spiritual, or of points in the broad debatable land that lies between the two jurisdictions. It is a failure to understand the distinction which exists between these that has led many writers to think that in the rejection by Englishmen of claims put forward at various times by the Roman curia in matters wholly temporal, or where the temporal became involved in the spiritual, they have a proof that England never fully acknowledged the spiritual headship of the See of Rome.

That the Pope did in fact exercise great powers in England over and above those in his spiritual prerogative is a matter of history. No one has more thoroughly examined this subject than Professor Maitland, and the summary of his conclusions given in his *History of English Law* will serve to correct many misconceptions upon the matter. What he says may be taken as giving a fairly accurate picture of the relations of the Christian nations of Christendom to the Holy See from the twelfth century to the disintegration of the system in the throes of the Reformation. "It was a wonderful system," he writes. "The whole of Western Europe was subject to the jurisdiction of one tribunal of last resort, the Roman curia. Appeals to it were encouraged by all manner of means, appeals at almost every stage of almost

every proceeding. But the Pope was far more than the president of a court of appeal. Very frequently the courts Christian which did justice in England were courts which were acting under his supervision and carrying out his written instructions. A very large part, and by far the most permanently important part, of the ecclesiastical litigation that went on in this country came before English prelates who were sitting not as English prelates, not as ‘judges ordinary,’ but as mere delegates of the Pope, commissioned to hear and determine this or that particular case. Bracton, indeed, treats the Pope as the ordinary judge of every Englishman in spiritual things, and the only ordinary judge whose powers are unlimited.”

The Pope enjoyed a power of declaring the law to which but very wide and very vague limits could be set. Each separate church might have its customs, but there was a *lex communis*, a common law, of the universal Church. In the view of the canonist, any special rules of the Church of England have hardly a wider scope, hardly a less dependent place, than have the customs of Kent or the bye-laws of London in the eye of the English lawyer.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *History of English Law*, i., p. 93-4. Mr. James Gairdner, in a letter to *The Guardian*, March 1, 1899, says: “There were, in the Middle Ages, in every kingdom of Europe that owned the Pope’s jurisdiction, two authorities, the one temporal and the other spiritual, and the head of the spiritual jurisdiction was at Rome. The bishops had the rule over their clergy, even in criminal matters, and over the laity as well in matters of faith. Even a bishop’s decision, it is true, might be disputed, and there was an appeal to the Pope; nay, the Pope’s decision might be disputed, and there was an appeal to a general council. Thus there was, in every kingdom, an *imperium in imperio*,

We have only to examine the *Regesta* of the Popes, even up to the dawn of difficulties in the reign of Henry VIII., to see that the system as sketched in this passage was in full working order; and it was herein that chiefly lay the danger even to the spiritual prerogatives of the Head of the Church. Had the Providence of God destined that the nations of the world should have become a Christendom in fact – a theocracy presided over by his Vicar on earth – the system elaborated by the Roman curia would not have tended doubtless to obscure the real and essential prerogatives of the spiritual Head of the Christian Church. As it was by Providence ordained, and as subsequent events have shown, claims of authority to determine matters more or less of the temporal order, together with the worldly pomp and show with which the Popes of the renaissance had surrounded themselves, not only tended to obscure the higher and supernatural powers which are the enduring heritage of St. Peter's successors in the See of Rome; but, however clear the distinction between the necessary and the accidental prerogatives might appear to the mind of the trained theologian or the perception of the saint, to the ordinary man, when the one was called in question the other was imperilled. And, as a fact, in England popular irritation at the interference of the spirituality generally in matters not wholly within the strictly

but nobody objected to such a state of matters, not even kings, seeing that they could, as a rule, get anything they wanted out of the Popes – even some things, occasionally, that the Popes ought not to have conceded.”

ecclesiastical sphere was, at a given moment, skilfully turned by the small reforming party into national, if tacit, acquiescence in the rejection of even the spiritual prerogatives of the Roman Pontiffs.

It is necessary to insist upon this matter if the full meaning of the Reformation movement is to be understood. Here in England, there can be no doubt, on the one hand, that no nation more fully and freely bowed to the spiritual supremacy of the Holy See; on the other, that there was a dislike of interference in matters which they regarded, rightly or wrongly, as outside the sphere of the Papal prerogative. The national feeling had grown by leaps and bounds in the early years of the sixteenth century. But it was not until the ardent spirits among the doctrinal reformers had succeeded in weakening the hold of Catholicity in religion on the hearts of the people that this rise of national feeling entered into the ecclesiastical domain, and the love of country could be effectually used to turn them against the Pope, even as Head of the Christian Church. With this distinction clearly before the mind, it is possible to understand the general attitude of the English nation to the Pope and his authority on the eve of the overthrow of his jurisdiction.

To begin with some evidence of popular teaching as to the Pope's position as Head of the Church. It is, of course, evident that in many works the supremacy of the Holy See is assumed and not positively stated. This is exactly what we should expect in a matter which was certainly taken for granted by all. William

Bond, a learned priest, and subsequently a monk of Syon, with Richard Whitford, was the author of a book called the *Pilgrimage of Perfection*, published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1531. It is a work, as the author tells us, “very profitable to all Christian persons to read”; and the third book consists of a long and careful explanation of the Creed. In the section treating about the tenth article is to be found a very complete statement of the teaching of the Christian religion on the Church. After taking the marks of the Church, the author says: “There may be set no other foundation for the Church, but only that which is put, namely, Christ Jesus. It is certain, since it is founded on the Apostles, as our Lord said to Peter, ‘I have prayed that thy faith fail not.’ And no more it shall; for (as St. Cyprian says) the Church of Rome was never yet the root of heresy. This Church Apostolic is so named the Church of Rome, because St. Peter and St. Paul, who under Christ were heads and princes of this Church, deposited there the tabernacles of their bodies, which God willed should be buried there and rest in Rome, and that should be the chief see in the world; just as commonly in all other places the chief see of the bishop is where the chief saint and bishop of the see is buried. By this you may know how Christ is the Head of the Church, and how our Holy Father the Pope of Rome is Head of the Church. Many, because they know not this mystery of Holy Scripture, have erred and fallen to heresies in denying the excellent dignity of our Holy Father the Pope of Rome.”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ William Bond, *The Pilgrimage of perfeccyon*, 1531, f. 223.

In the same way Roger Edgworth, a preacher in the reign of Henry VIII., speaking on the text “*Tu vocaberis Cephas,*” says: “And by this the error and ignorance of certain summalists are confounded, who take this text as one of their strongest reasons for the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. In so doing, such summalists would plainly destroy the text of St. John’s Gospel to serve their purpose, which they have no need to do, for there are as well texts of Holy Scripture and passages of ancient writers which abundantly prove the said primacy of the Pope.”⁹⁶

When by 1523 the attacks of Luther and his followers on the position of the Pope had turned men’s minds in England to the question, and caused them to examine into the grounds of their belief, several books on the subject appeared in England. One in particular, intended to be subsidiary to the volume published by the king himself against Luther, was written by a theologian named Edward Powell, and published by Pynson in London. In his preface, Powell says that before printing his work he had submitted it to the most learned authority at Oxford (*eruditissimo Oxoniensium*). The first part of the book is devoted to a scientific treatise upon the Pope’s supremacy, with all the proofs from Scripture and the Fathers set out in detail. “This then,” he concludes, “is the Catholic Church, which, having the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, as its head, offers the means of sanctifying the souls of all its members, and testifies to the truth of all that is to be taught.” The high priesthood of Peter “is said

⁹⁶ Roger Edgworth, *Sermons*, 1557, fol. 102

to be Roman, not because it cannot be elsewhere, but through a certain congruity which makes Rome the most fitting place. That is, that where the centre of the world's government was, there also should be placed the high priesthood of Christ. Just as of old the summus Pontifex was in Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jewish nation, so now it is in Rome, the centre of Christian civilisation."⁹⁷

We naturally, of course, turn to the works of Sir Thomas More for evidence of the teaching as to the Pope's position at this period; and his testimony is abundant and definite. Thus in the second book of his *Dyalogue*, written in 1528, arguing that there must be unity in the Church of Christ, he points out that the effect of Lutheranism has been to breed diversity of faith and practice. "Though they began so late," he writes, "yet there are not only as many sects almost as men, but also the masters themselves change their minds and their opinions every day. Bohemia is also in the same case: one faith in the town, another in the field; one in Prague, another in the next town; and yet in Prague itself, one faith in one street, another in the next. And yet all these acknowledge that they cannot have the Sacraments ministered but by such priests as are made by authority derived and conveyed from the Pope who is, under Christ, Vicar and head of our Church."⁹⁸ It is important to note in this passage how the

⁹⁷ Edward Powell, *Propugnaculum summi sacerdotii, &c., adversus M. Lutherum*, 1523, fol. 22 and fol. 35.

⁹⁸ *English Works*, p. 171.

author takes for granted the Pope's supreme authority over the Christian Church. To this subject he returns, and is more explicit in a later chapter of the same book. The Church, he says, is the "company and congregation of all nations professing the name of Christ." This church "has begun with Christ, and has had Him for its head and St. Peter His Vicar after Him, and the head under Him; and always since, the successors of him continually. And it has had His holy faith and His blessed Sacraments and His holy Scriptures delivered, kept, and conserved therein by God and His Holy Spirit, and albeit some nations fall away, yet just as no matter how many boughs whatever fall from the tree, even though more fall than be left thereon, still there is no doubt which is the very tree, although each of them were planted again in another place and grew to a greater than the stock it first came off, in the same way we see and know well that all the companies and sects of heretics and schismatics, however great they grow, come out of this Church I speak of; and we know that the heretics are they that are severed, and the Church the stock that they all come out of."⁹⁹ Here Sir Thomas More expressly gives communion with the successors of St. Peter as one of the chief tests of the true Church.

Again, in his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, written in 1532 when he was Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More speaks specially about the absolute necessity of the Church being One and not able to teach error. There is one known and recognised Church

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 185.

existing throughout the world, which “is that mystical body be it never so sick.” Of this mystical body “Christ is the principal head”; and it is no part of his concern, he says, for the moment to determine “whether the successor of St. Peter is his vicar-general and head under him, as all Christian nations have now long taken him.”¹⁰⁰ Later on he classes himself with “poor popish men,”¹⁰¹ and in the fifth book he discusses the question “whether the Pope and his sect” (as Tyndale called them) “is Christ’s Church or no.” On this matter More is perfectly clear. “I call the Church of Christ,” he says, “the known Catholic Church of all Christian nations, neither gone out nor cut off. And although all these nations do now and have long since recognised and acknowledged the Pope, not as the bishop of Rome but as the successor of St. Peter, to be their chief spiritual governor under God and Christ’s Vicar on earth, yet I never put the Pope as part of the definition of the Church, by defining it to be the common known congregation of all Christian nations under one head the Pope.”

I avoided this definition purposely, he continues, so as not “to entangle the matter with the two questions at once, for I knew well that the Church being proved this common known Catholic congregation of all Christian nations abiding together in one faith, neither fallen nor cut off; there might, peradventure, be made a second question after that, whether over all this Catholic

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 528.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 538.

Church the Pope must needs be head and chief governor and chief spiritual shepherd, or whether, if the unity of the faith was kept among them all, every province might have its own spiritual chief over itself, without any recourse unto the Pope...

“For the avoiding of all such intricacies, I purposely abstained from putting the Pope as part of the definition of the Church, as a thing that was not necessary; for if he be the necessary head, he is included in the name of the whole body, and whether he be or not is a matter to be treated and disputed of besides” (p. 615). As to Tyndale’s railing against the authority of the Pope because there have been “Popes that have evil played their parts,” he should remember, says More, that “there have been Popes again right holy men, saints and martyrs too,” and that, moreover, the personal question of goodness or badness has nothing to say to the office.¹⁰²

In like manner, More, when arguing against Friar Barnes, says that like the Donatists “these heretics call the Catholic Christian people papists,” and in this they are right, since “Saint Austin called the successor of Saint Peter the chief head on earth of the whole Catholic Church, as well as any man does now.” He here plainly states his view of the supremacy of the See of Rome.¹⁰³ He accepted it not only as an antiquarian fact, but as a thing necessary for the preservation of the unity of the Faith. Into the further question whether the office of supreme pastor was

¹⁰² *English Works*, p. 616.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 798.

established by Christ Himself, or, as theologians would say, *de jure divino*, or whether it had grown with the growth and needs of the Church, More did not then enter. The fact was sufficient for him that the only Christian Church he recognised had for long ages regarded the Pope as the *Pastor pastorum*, the supreme spiritual head of the Church of Christ. His own words, almost at the end of his life, are the best indication of his mature conclusion on this matter. "I have," he says, "by the grace of God, been always a Catholic, never out of communion with the Roman Pontiff; but I have heard it said at times that the authority of the Roman Pontiff was certainly lawful and to be respected, but still an authority derived from human law, and not standing upon a divine prescription. Then, when I observed that public affairs were so ordered that the sources of the power of the Roman Pontiff would necessarily be examined, I gave myself up to a diligent examination of that question for the space of seven years, and found that the authority of the Roman Pontiff, which you rashly – I will not use stronger language – have set aside, is not only lawful to be respected and necessary, but also grounded on the divine law and prescription. That is my opinion, that is the belief in which, by the grace of God, I shall die."¹⁰⁴

Looking at More's position in regard to this question in the light of all that he has written, it would seem to be certain that he never for a moment doubted that the Papacy was necessary for the Church. He accepted this without regard to the reasons

¹⁰⁴ Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries (popular edition), p. 367.

of the faith that was in him, and in this he was not different from the body of Englishmen at large. When, in 1522, the book by Henry VIII. appeared against Luther, it drew the attention of Sir Thomas specially to a consideration of the grounds upon which the supremacy of the Pope was held by Catholics. As the result of his examination he became so convinced that it was of divine institution that “my conscience would be in right great peril,” he says, “if I should follow the other side and deny the primacy to be provided of God.” Even before examination More evidently held implicitly the same ideas, since in his Latin book against Luther, published in 1523, he declared his entire agreement with Bishop Fisher on the subject. That the latter was fully acquainted with the reasons which went to prove that the Papacy was of divine institution, and that he fully accepted it as such, is certain.¹⁰⁵

When, with the failure of the divorce proceedings, came the rejection of Papal supremacy in England, there were plenty of people ready to take the winning side, urging that the rejection was just, and not contrary to the true conception of the Christian Church. It is interesting to note that in all the pulpit tirades against the Pope and what was called his “usurped supremacy,”

¹⁰⁵ In his work against Luther, Bishop Fisher teaches the supremacy of the Pope without any ambiguity. In the *Sermon had at Paulis* against Luther and his followers, he also put his position perfectly clearly. The Church that has a right to the name *Catholic* has derived the right from its communion with the See of Peter. Our Lord called Cephias, Peter, or rock, to signify that upon him as a rock He would build His church. Unto Peter He committed His flock, and “the true Christian people which we have at this day was derived by a continual succession from the See of Peter” (fol. e. 4. d.).

there is no suggestion that this supremacy had not hitherto been fully and freely recognised by all in the country. On the contrary, the change was regarded as a happy emancipation from an authority which had been hitherto submitted to without question or doubt. A sermon preached at St. Paul's the Sunday after the execution of the Venerable Bishop Fisher, and a few days before Sir Thomas More was called to lay down his life for the same cause, is of interest, as specially making mention of these two great men, and of the reasons which had forced them to lay down their lives in the Pope's quarrel. The preacher was one Simon Matthew, and his object was to instruct the people in the new theory of the Christian Church necessary on the rejection of the headship of the Pope. "The diversity of regions and countries," he says, "does not make any diversity of churches, but a unity of faith makes all regions one Church." "There was," he continued, "no necessity to know Peter, as many have reckoned, in the Bishop of Rome, (teaching) that except we knew him and his holy college, we could not be of Christ's Church. Many have thought it necessary that if a man would be a member of the Church of Christ, he must belong to the holy church of Rome and take the Holy Father thereof for the supreme Head and for the Vicar of Christ, yea for Christ Himself, (since) to be divided from him was even to be divided from Christ." This, the preacher informs his audience, is "damnable teaching," and that "the Bishop of Rome has no more power by the laws of God in this realm than any foreign bishop."

He then goes on to speak of what was, no doubt, in everybody's mind at the time, the condemnation of the two eminent Englishmen for upholding the ancient teachings as to the Pope's spiritual headship. "Of late," he says, "you have had experience of some, whom neither friends nor kinsfolk, nor the judgment of both universities, Cambridge and Oxford, nor the universal consent of all the clergy of this realm, nor the laws of the Parliament, nor their most natural and loving prince, could by any gentle ways revoke from their disobedience, but would needs persist therein, giving pernicious occasion to the multitude to murmur and grudge at the king's laws, seeing that they were men of estimation and would be seen wiser than all the realm and of better conscience than others, justifying themselves and condemning all the realm besides. These being condemned and the king's prisoners, yet did not cease to conceive ill of our sovereign, refusing his laws, but even in prison wrote to their mutual comfort in their damnable opinions. I mean Doctor Fisher and Sir Thomas More, whom I am as sorry to name as any man here is to hear named: sorry for that they, being sometime men of worship and honour, men of famous learning and many excellent graces and so tenderly sometime beloved by their prince, should thus unkindly, unnaturally, and traitorously use themselves. Our Lord give them grace to be repentant! Let neither their fame, learning, nor honour move you loving subjects from your prince; but regard ye the truth."

The preacher then goes on to condemn the coarse style of

preaching against the Pope in which some indulged at that time. "I would exhort," he says, "such as are of my sort and use preaching, so to temper their words that they be not noted to speak of stomach and rather to prate than preach. Nor would I have the defenders of the king's matters rage and rail, or scold, as many are thought to do, calling the Bishop of Rome the 'harlot of Babylon' or 'the beast of Rome,' with many such other, as I have heard some say; these be meeter to preach at Paul's Wharf than at Paul's Cross."¹⁰⁶

The care that was taken at this time in sermons to the people to decry the Pope's authority, as well as the abuse which was hurled at his office, is in reality ample proof of the popular belief in his supremacy, which it was necessary to eradicate from the hearts of the English people. Few, probably, would have been able to state the reason for their belief; but that the spiritual headship was fully and generally accepted as a fact is, in view of the works of the period, not open to question. Had there been disbelief, or even doubt, as to the matter, some evidence of this would be forthcoming in the years that preceded the final overthrow of Papal jurisdiction in England.

Nor are direct declarations of the faith of the English Church wanting. To the evidence already adduced, a sermon preached by Bishop Longland in 1527, before the archbishops and bishops of England in synod at Westminster, may be added. The discourse

¹⁰⁶ Simon Matthew, *Sermon made in the Cathedrall Church of Saynt-Paule, 27 June 1535* (Berthelet, 1535).

is directed against the errors of Luther and the social evils to which his teaching had led in Germany. The English bishops, Bishop Longland declares, are determined to do all in their power to preserve the English Church from this evil teaching, and he exhorts all to pray that God will not allow the universal and chief Church – the Roman Church – to be further afflicted, that He will restore liberty to the most Holy Father and high-priest now impiously imprisoned, and in a lamentable state; that He Himself will protect the Church’s freedom threatened by a multitude of evil men, and through the pious prayers of His people will free it and restore its most Holy Father. Just as the early Christians prayed when Peter was in prison, so ought all to pray in these days of affliction. “Shall we not,” he cries, “mourn for the evil life of the chief Church (of Christendom)? Shall we not beseech God for the liberation of the primate and chief ruler of the Church? Let us pray then; let us pray that through our prayers we may be heard. Let us implore freedom for our mother, the Catholic Church, and the liberty, so necessary for the Christian religion, of our chief Father on earth – the Pope.”¹⁰⁷

Again, Dr. John Clark, the English ambassador in Rome, when presenting Henry’s book against Luther to Leo X. in public consistory, said that the English king had taken up the defence of the Church because in attacking the Pope the German reformer had tried to subvert the order established by God Himself. In the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* he had

¹⁰⁷ Joannis Longlondi *Tres conciones* (R. Pynson), f. 45.

given to the world a book “most pernicious to mankind,” and before presenting Henry’s reply, he begged to be allowed to protest “the devotion and veneration of the king towards the Pope and his most Holy See.” Luther had declared war “not only against your Holiness but also against your office; against the ecclesiastical hierarchy, against this See, and against that Rock established by God Himself.” England, the speaker continued, “has never been behind other nations in the worship of God and the Christian faith, and in obedience to the Roman Church.” Hence “no nation” detests more cordially “this monster (Luther) and the heresies broached by him.” For he has declared war “not only against your Holiness but against your office; against the ecclesiastical hierarchy, against this See, that Rock established by God Himself.”¹⁰⁸

Whilst the evidence goes to show the full acceptance by the English people of the Pope’s spiritual headship of the Church, it is also true that the system elaborated by the ecclesiastical lawyers in the later Middle Ages, dealing, as it did, so largely with temporal matters, property, and the rights attaching thereto, opened the door to causes of disagreement between Rome and England, and at times open complaints and criticism of the exercise of Roman authority in England made themselves heard. This is true of all periods of English history. Since these disagreements are obviously altogether connected with the

¹⁰⁸ *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments against Luther* (translation by J. W., 1687), f. a. i.

question, not of spirituals, but of temporals, they would not require any more special notice but for the misunderstandings they have given rise to in regard to the general attitude of men's minds to Rome and Papal authority on the eve of the Reformation. It is easy to find evidence of this. As early as 1517, a work bearing on this question appeared in England. It was a translation of several tracts that had been published abroad on the debated matter of Constantine's donation to the Pope, and it was issued from the press of Thomas Godfray in a well-printed folio. After a translation of the Latin version of a Greek manuscript of Constantine's gift, which had been found in the Papal library by Bartolomeo Pincern, and published by order of Pope Julius II., there is given in this volume the critical examination of this gift by Laurence Valla, the opinion of Nicholas of Cusa, written for the Council of Basle, and that of St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence. The interest of the volume for the present purpose chiefly consists in the fact of the publication in England at this date of the views expressed by Laurence Valla. Valla had been a canon of the Lateran and an eminent scholar, who was employed by Pope Nicholas V. to translate Thucydides and Herodotus. His outspoken words got him into difficulties with the Roman curia, and obliged him to retire to Naples, where he died in 1457. The tract was edited with a preface by the leader of the reform party in Germany, Ulrich von Hutten. In this introduction von Hutten says that by the publication of Pincern's translation of the supposed donation of Constantine Julius II. had "provoked

and stirred up men to war and battle,” and further, he blames the Pontiff because he would not permit Valla’s work against the genuineness of the gift to be published. With the accession of Leo X. von Hutten looked, he declares, for better days, since “by striking as it were a cymbal of peace the Pope has raised up the hearts and minds of all Christian people.” Before this time the truth could not be spoken. Popes looked “to pluck the riches and goods of all men to their own selves,” with the result that “on the other side they take away from themselves all that belongs to the succession of St. Peter.”

Valla, of course, condemns the supposed donation of Constantine to the Pope as spurious, and declares against the temporal claims the See of Rome had founded upon it. He strongly objects to the “temporal as well as the spiritual sword” being in the hands of the successors of St. Peter. “They say,” he writes, “that the city of Rome is theirs, that the kingdom of Naples is their own property: that all Italy, France, and Spain, Germany, England, and all the west part of the world belongs to them. For all these nations and countries (they say) are contained in the instrument and writ of the donation or grant.”

The whole tract is an attack upon the temporal sovereignty of the head of the Christian Church, and it was indeed a bold thing for Ulrich von Hutten to publish it and dedicate it to Pope Leo X. For the present purpose it is chiefly important to find all this set out in an English dress, whilst so far and for a long while after, the English people were loyal and true to the spiritual headship of

the Pope, and were second to no other nation in their attachment to him. At that time recent events, including the wars of Julius II., must certainly have caused men to reflect upon the temporal aspect of the Papacy; and hearts more loyal to the successor of St. Peter than was that of Von Hutten would probably have joined fervently in the concluding words of his preface as it appeared in English. "Would to God I might (for there is nothing I do long for more) once see it brought to pass that the Pope were only the Vicar of Christ and not also the Vicar of the Emperor, and that this horrible saying may no longer be heard: 'the Church fighteth and warreth against the Perugians, the Church fighteth against the people of Bologna.' It is not the Church that fights and wars against Christian men; it is the Pope that does so. The Church fights against wicked spirits in the regions of the air. Then shall the Pope be called, and in very deed be, a Holy Father, the Father of all men, the Father of the Church. Then shall he not raise and stir up wars and battles among Christian men, but he shall allay and stop the wars which have been stirred up by others, by his apostolic censure and papal majesty."¹⁰⁹

Evidence of what, above, has been called the probable searching of men's minds as to the action of the Popes in temporal matters, may be seen in a book called a *Dyalogue between a knight and a clerk, concerning the power spiritual and*

¹⁰⁹ *A treatise of the donation or gift and endowment of possessions given (by Constantine) with the judgement of certain great men*, 1517, Thomas Godfray.

temporal.¹¹⁰ In reply to the complaint of the clerk that in the evil days in which their lot had fallen “the statutes and ordinances of bishops of Rome and the decrees of holy fathers” were disregarded, the knight exposes a layman’s view of the matter. “Whether they ordain,” he says, “or have ordained in times past of the temporality, may well be law to you, but not to us. No man has power to ordain statutes of things over which he has no lordship, as the king of France may ordain no statute (binding) on the emperor nor the emperor on the king of England. And just as princes of this world may ordain no statutes for your spirituality over which they have no power; no more may you ordain statutes of their temporalities over which you have neither power nor authority. Therefore, whatever you ordain about temporal things, over which you have received no power from God, is vain (and void). And therefore but lately, I laughed well fast, when I heard that Boniface VIII. had made a new statute that he himself should be above all secular lords, princes, kings, and emperors, and above all kingdoms, and make laws about all things: and that he only needed to write, for all things shall be his when he has so written: and thus all things will be yours. If he wishes to have my castle, my town, my field, my money, or any other such thing he needed, nothing but to will it, and write it, and make a decree, and wot that it be done, (for) to all such things he has a right.”

The clerk does not, however, at once give up the position. You mean, he says in substance, that in your opinion the Pope has no

¹¹⁰ London, Thomas Berthelet.

power over your property and goods. “Though we should prove this by our law and by written decrees, you account them for nought. For you hold that Peter had no lordship or power over temporals, but by such law written. But if you will be a true Christian man and of right belief, you will not deny that Christ is the lord of all things. To Him it is said in the Psalter book: ‘Ask of me, and I will give you nations for thine heritage, and all the world about for thy possession’ (Ps. ii.). These are God’s words, and no one doubts that He can ordain for the whole earth.”

Nobody denies God’s lordship over the earth, replied the knight, “but if be proved by Holy Writ that the Pope is lord of all temporalities, then kings and princes must needs be subject to the Pope in temporals as in spirituals.” So they are, in effect, answered the clerk. Peter was made “Christ’s full Vicar,” and as such he can do what his lord can, “especially when he is Vicar with full power, without any withdrawing of power, and he thus can direct all Christian nations in temporal matters.” But, said the knight, “Christ’s life plainly shows that He made no claim whatever to temporal power. Also in Peter’s commission He gave him not the keys of the kingdom of the earth, but the keys of the kingdom of heaven. It is also evident that the bishops of the Hebrews were subjects of the kings, and kings deposed bishops; but,” he adds, fearing to go too far, “God forbid that they should do so now.” Then he goes on to quote St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews to prove that St. Peter was Christ’s Vicar only in “the godly kingdom of souls, and that though some temporal

things may be managed by bishops, yet nevertheless it is plain and evident that bishops should not be occupied in the government of the might and lordship of the world.” And indeed, he urges, “Christ neither made St. Peter a knight nor a crowned king, but ordained him a priest and bishop.” If the contention that “the Pope is the Vicar of God in temporal matter be correct,” then of necessity you must also grant that “the Pope may take from you and from us all the goods that you and we have, and give them all to whichever of his nephews or cousins he wills and give no reason why: and also that he may take away from princes and kings principalities and kingdoms, at his own will, and give them where he likes.”¹¹¹

This statement by the layman of the advanced clerical view is somewhat bald, and is probably intentionally exaggerated; but that it could be published even as a caricature of the position taken up by some ecclesiastics, shows that at this time some went very far indeed in their claims. It is all the more remarkable that the argument is seriously put forward in a tract, the author of which is evidently a Catholic at heart, and one who fully admits the supreme jurisdiction of the Pope in all matters spiritual. Of course, when the rejection of Papal jurisdiction became imminent, there were found many who by sermons and books endeavoured to eradicate the old teaching from the people’s hearts, and then it was that what was called, “the pretensions” of the successors of St. Peter in matters temporal were held

¹¹¹ *A dyalogue, ut sup.*, ff. 3-7.

up to serve as a convenient means of striking at the spiritual prerogatives. As a sample, a small book named a *Mustre of scismatyke bysshops of Rome* may be taken. It was printed in 1534, and its title is sufficient to indicate its tone. The author, one John Roberts, rakes together a good many unsavoury tales about the lives of individual Popes, and in particular he translates the life of Gregory VII. to enforce his moral. In his preface he says, “There is a fond, foolish, fantasy raging in many men’s heads nowadays, and it is this: the Popes, say they, cannot err. This fantastical blindness was never taught by any man of literature, but by some peckish pedler or clouting collier: it is so gross in itself.” And I “warn, advise, beseech, and adjure all my well-beloved countrymen in England that men do not permit themselves to be blinded with affection, with hypocrisy, or with superstition. What have we got from Rome but pulling, polling, picking, robbing, stealing, oppression, blood-shedding, and tyranny daily exercised upon us by him and his.”¹¹²

¹¹² f. A. ii.; c. i.; c. iiij. The author recommends those who would understand the Pope’s power to “resort unto *The glasse of truth* or to the book named the *Determinations of the universities*.” The book named here *A glasse of truth* is written in favour of the divorce. “Some lawyers,” the author says, “attribute too much to the Pope – at length there shall be no law, but only his will.” The work was published by Berthelet anonymously, but Richard Croke, in a letter written at this period (Ellis, *Historical Letters*, 3rd series, ii. 195), says that the book was written by King Henry himself. It was generally said that Henry had written a defence of his divorce; but Strype did not think it was more than a State paper. Croke (p. 198) says that people at Oxford, “Mr. John Roper and others,” did not believe that the king was really the author. He says that the tract has done more than anything else to get people to take the king’s side.

Again, as another example of how the mind of the people was stirred up, we may take a few sentences from *A Worke entytled of the olde God and the new*. This tract is one of the most scurrilous of the German productions of the period. It was published in English by Myles Coverdale, and is on the list of books prohibited by the king in 1534. After a tirade against the Pope, whom he delights in calling “anti-Christ,” the author declares that the Popes are the cause of many of the evils from which people were suffering at that time. In old days, he says, the Bishop of Rome was nothing more “than a pastor or herdsman,” and adds: “Now he who has been at Rome in the time of Pope Alexander VI. or of Pope Julius II., he need not read many histories. I put it to his judgment whether any of the Pagans or of the Turks ever did lead such a life as did these.”¹¹³

The same temper of mind appears in the preface of a book called *The Defence of Peace*, translated into English by William Marshall and printed in 1535. The work itself was written by Marsilius of Padua about 1323, but the preface is dated 1522. The whole tone is distinctly anti-clerical, but the main line of attack is developed from the side of the temporalities possessed

¹¹³ *Of the olde God and the new*, B. 1. As another sample of what was at this time said about the Popes, we may take the following: Rome, says the author, “was by Justinian restored from ruin and decay, from whence also came the riches of the Church. At the coming of these riches, forthwith the book of the gospel was shut up, and the Bishops of Rome, instead of evangelical poverty, began to put forth their heads garnished with three crowns.” This is taken from the preface of Hartman Dulechin, who claims to have “taught the book to speak Latin.” It was originally printed and published in German. The English version is a translation of the Latin.

by churchmen. Even churchmen, he says, look mainly to the increase of their worldly goods. “Riches give honour, riches give benefices, riches give power and authority, riches cause men to be regarded and greatly esteemed.” Especially is the author of the preface severe upon the temporal position which the Pope claims as inalienably united with his office as head of the Church. Benedict XII., he says, acted in many places as if he were all powerful, appointing rulers and officers in cities within the emperor’s dominions, saying, “that all power and rule and empire was his own, for as much as whosoever is the successor of Peter on earth is the only Vicar or deputy of Jesus Christ the King of Heaven.”¹¹⁴

In the body of the book itself the same views are expressed. The authority of the primacy is said to be “not immediately from God, but by the will and mind of man, just as other offices of a commonwealth are,” and that the real meaning and extent of the claims put forward by the Pope can be seen easily. They are temporal, not spiritual. “This is the meaning of this title among the Bishops of Rome, that as Christ had the fulness of power and jurisdiction over all kings, princes, commonwealth, companies, or fellowships, and all singular persons, so in like manner they who call themselves the Vicars of Christ and Peter, have also the same fulness of enactive jurisdiction, determined by no law of man,” and thus it is that “the Bishops of Rome, with their desire

¹¹⁴ *The Defence of Peace, written in Latin more than 200 years ago, and set forth in the English tongue by Wylyyam Marshall. R. Wyer, 1535, folio.*

for dominion, have been the cause of discords and wars.”¹¹⁵

Lancelot Ridley, in his *Exposition of the Epistle of Jude*, published in 1538 after the breach with Rome, takes the same line. The Pope has no right to have “exempted himself” and “other spiritual men from the obedience to the civil rulers and powers.” Some, indeed, he says, “set up the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome above kings, princes, and emperors, and that by the ordinance of God, as if God and His Holy Scripture did give to the Bishop of Rome a secular power above kings, princes, and emperors here in this world. It is evident by Scripture that the Bishop of Rome has no other power but at the pleasure of princes, than in the ministration of the Word of God in preaching God’s Word purely and sincerely, to reprove by it evil men, and to do such things as become a preacher, a bishop, a minister of God’s Word to do. Other power Scripture does not attribute to the Bishop of Rome, nor suffer him to use. Scripture wills him to be a bishop, and to do the office of a bishop, and not to play the prince, the king, the emperor, the lord, and so forth.”¹¹⁶ It is important to note in this passage that the writer was a reformer, and that he was expressing his views after the jurisdiction of the Holy See had been rejected by the king and his advisers. The ground of the rejection, according to him – or at any rate the

¹¹⁵ *The Defence of Peace*, f. 42. The well-known anti-papal opinions of Marsilius of Padua are, of course, of no interest in themselves, but their publication at this time in English shows the methods by which it was hoped to undermine the Papal authority in the country.

¹¹⁶ *Exposition, &c., ut supra*, f. i.

reason which it was desired to emphasise before the public – would appear to be the temporal authority which the Popes had been exercising.

In the same year, 1538, Richard Morysine published a translation of a letter addressed by John Sturmius, the Lutheran, to the cardinals appointed by Pope Paul III. to consider what could be done to stem the evils which threatened the Church. As the work of this Papal commission was then directly put before the English people, some account of it is almost necessary. The commission consisted of four cardinals, two archbishops, one bishop, the abbot of San Giorgio, Venice, and the master of the Sacred Palace, and its report was supposed to have been drafted by Cardinal Caraffa, afterwards Pope Paul IV. The document thanks God who has inspired the Pope “to put forth his hand to support the ruins of the tottering and almost fallen Church of Christ, and to raise it again to its pristine height.” As a beginning, the Holy Father has commanded them to lay bare to him “those most grave abuses, that is diseases, by which the Church of God, and this Roman curia especially, is afflicted,” and which has brought about the state of ruin now so evident. The initial cause of all has been, they declare, that the Popes have surrounded themselves with people who only told them what they thought would be pleasant to them, and who had not the honesty and loyalty to speak the truth. This adulation had deceived the Roman Pontiffs about many things. “To get the truth to their ears was always most difficult. Teachers sprung up who were ready to

declare that the Pope was the master of all benefices, and as master might by right sell them as his own." As a consequence, it was taught that the Pope could not be guilty of simony, and that the will of the Pope was the highest law, and could override all law. "From this source, Holy Father," they continue, "as from the Trojan horse, so many abuses and most grievous diseases have grown up in the Church of God." Even pagans, they say, scoff at the state of the Christian Church as it is at present, and they, the commissioners, beg the Pope not to delay in immediately taking in hand the correction of the manifest abuses which afflict and disgrace the Church of Christ. "Begin the cure," they say, "whence sprung the disease. Follow the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul: 'be a dispenser, not a lord.'"

They then proceed to note the abuses which to them are most apparent, and to suggest remedies. We are not concerned with these further than to point out that, as a preliminary, they state that the true principle of government is, that what is the law must be kept, and that dispensations should be granted only on the most urgent causes, since nothing brings government to such bad repute as the continual exercise of the power of dispensation. Further, they note that it is certainly not lawful for the Vicar of Christ to make any profit (*lucrum*) by the dispensations he is obliged to give.

Sturmius, in his preface, says he had hopes of better things, now that there was a Pope ready to listen. "It is a rare thing, and much more than man could hope for, that there should come

a Bishop of Rome who would require his prelates upon their oath to open the truth, to show abuses, and to seek remedies for them.” He is pleased to think that these four cardinals, Sadolet, Paul Caraffa, Contarini, and Reginald Pole had allowed fully and frankly that a great portion of the difficulty had come from the unfortunate attitude of the Popes in regard to worldly affairs. “You acknowledge,” he says, “that no lordship is committed to the Bishop of Rome, but rather a certain cure by which he may rule things in the church according to good order. If you admit this to be true and will entirely grant us this, a great part of our (*i. e.* Lutheran) controversy is taken away; granting this also, that we did not dissent from you without great and just causes.” The three points the cardinals claimed for the Pope, it may be noted, were: (1) that he was to be Bishop of Rome; (2) that he was to be universal Bishop; and (3) that he should be allowed temporal sovereignty over certain cities in Italy.¹¹⁷ Again we find

¹¹⁷ Johann Sturmius, *Epistle sent to the cardinals and prelates that were appointed by the Bishop of Rome to search out the abuses of the Church*. Translated by Richard Morysine. Berthelet, 1538. A later copy of the *Concilium de emendanda Ecclesia*, printed by Sturmius with his letter in 1538, in the British Museum, formerly belonged to Cecil. The title-page has his signature, “Gulielmus Cecilius, 1540,” and there are marks and words underlined, and some few observations from his pen in the margin. It is interesting to note that what struck the statesman as a youth were just the points which could be turned against the temporal claims of the Roman See. The special evils needing correction which the committee of cardinals note, and which they call *abuses*, are collected under 22 headings, some of which are the following: —(1) Ordination of priests without cure of souls, not learned, of lower order in life, and too young and of doubtful morals: They suggest that each diocese should have a *magistrum* to see that candidates are properly instructed – none to be ordained except by their own bishop.(2)

the same view put before the English people in this translation:

Benefices, and in particular, episcopal sees, are given to people with interest, and not because their elevation would be good for the church. They suggest that the best man should be chosen, and residence should be insisted on, and consequently “non Italo conferendum est beneficium in Hispania aut in Britannia aut ex contra.”(3) *Pensions* reserved from Benefices. Though the Pope, “who is the universal dispenser of the goods of the church,” may reserve a part for a pious use, *e. g.* for the poor, &c., still not to reserve sufficient for the proper purpose of the beneficiary, and still more to give a pension out of a benefice to one rich enough without, is wrong.(4) Change of benefices for the sake of gain, and handing on benefices by arrangement or always assigning episcopal sees to coadjutors, is the cause of outcry against the clergy, and is in reality making private property out of what is public.(5) Permission to clergy to hold more than one benefice.(6) Cardinals being allowed to hold sees. They ought to be counsellors to the Pope in Rome, and when holding sees they are more or less dependent on the will of the kings, and so cannot give independent advice and speak their minds.(7) Absence of bishops from their sees.(8) Such religious houses as needed correction should be forbidden to profess members, and when they die out, their places should be taken by fervent religious. Confessors for convents must be approved by the ordinaries of the place.(9) The use of the keys ought never, under any pretext, to be granted for money.(10) Questors of the Holy Spirit, St. Anthony, &c., who foster superstition among the poor people, should be prohibited.(11) Confessional privileges and use of portable altars to be very rarely allowed.(12) No indulgences to be granted except once a year, and in the great cities only. Finally they say of Rome: “Hæc Romana civitas et ecclesia mater est et magistra aliarum ecclesiarum,” and hence it should be a model to all. Foreigners, however, who come to St. Peter’s find that priests “sordidi, ignari, induti paramentis et vestibus quibus nec in sordidis ædibus honeste uti possent, missas celebrant.” Cardinal Sadolet, on receiving a copy of Sturmius’s letter, replied in kindly terms. He had, he declared, a high opinion of “Sturmius, Melancthon, and Bucer, looking on them as most learned men, kindly disposed, and cordially friendly to him. He looked upon it as the peculiar characteristic of Luther to try and overwhelm all his opponents with shouts and attacks.” He speaks of the great piety of Pope Clement from personal knowledge. His wars were, he said, rather the work of his adversaries than his own (*De consilio*, ed. J. G. Schelhorn, 1748, p. 91). He also, in 1539, penned the *De Christiana Ecclesia* (in *Specilegium Romanum*, ii. p. 101 *seqq.*),

the chief objection to the admission of Papal prerogatives was the “lordship” which he claimed over and above the spiritual powers he exercised as successor of St. Peter. On this point we find preachers and writers of the period insisting most clearly and definitely. Some, of course, attack the spiritual jurisdiction directly, but most commonly such attacks are flavoured and served up for general consumption by a supply of abuse of the temporal assumptions and the worldly show of the Popes. This appealed to the popular mind, and to the growing sense of national aims and objects, and the real issue of the spiritual headship was obscured by the plea of national sentiment and safeguards.

To take one more example: Bishop Tunstall, on Palm Sunday, 1539, preached before the king and court. His object was to defend the rejection of the Papal supremacy and jurisdiction. He declaimed against the notion that the Popes were to be considered as free from subjection to worldly powers, maintaining that in this they were like all other men. “The Popes,” he says, “exalt their seat above the stars of God, and ascend above the clouds, and will be like to God Almighty... The Bishop of Rome offers his feet to be kissed, shod with his shoes on. This I saw myself, being present thirty-four years ago, when Julius, the Bishop of Rome, stood on his feet and one of his chamberlains held up his

sending it to Cardinal Salicati, and asking him to pass it on to Cardinal Contarini. It was the outcome of conversations about the troubles of the Church, and the result of the movement was the Council of Trent, to restore, as Sadolet says, ecclesiastical discipline “quæ nunc tota pæne nobis e manibus elapsa est.”

skirt because it stood not, as he thought, with his dignity that he should do it himself, that his shoes might appear, whilst a nobleman of great age prostrated himself upon the ground and kissed his shoes.”¹¹⁸

To us, to-day, much that was written and spoken at this time will appear, like many of the above passages, foolish and exaggerated; but the language served its purpose, and contributed more than anything else to lower the Popes in the eyes of the people, and to justify in their minds the overthrow of the ecclesiastical system which had postulated the Pope as the universal Father of the Christian Church. Each Sunday, in every parish church throughout the country, they had been invited in the bidding prayer, as their fathers had been for generations, to remember their duty of praying for their common Father, the Pope. When the Pope's authority was finally rejected by the English king and his advisers, it was necessary to justify this serious breach with the past religious practice, and the works of the period prove beyond doubt that this was done in the popular mind by turning men's thoughts to the temporal aspect of the Papacy, and making them think that it was for the national profit and honour that this foreign yoke should be cast off. Whilst this is clear, it is also equally clear in the works of the time that the purely religious aspect of the question was as far as possible relegated to a secondary place in the discussions. This was perhaps not unnatural, as the duty of defending the rejection

¹¹⁸ *Sermon on Palm Sunday*, Berthelet, 1539.

of the Papal supremacy can hardly have been very tasteful to those who were forced by the strong arm of the State to justify it before the people. As late as 1540 we are told by a contemporary writer that the spirituality under the bishops “favour as much as they dare the Bishop of Rome’s laws and his ways.”¹¹⁹

Even the actual meaning attached to the formal acknowledgment of the king’s Headship by the clergy was sufficiently ambiguous to be understood, by some at least, as aimed merely at the temporal jurisdiction of the Roman curia. It is true it is usually understood that Convocation by its act, acknowledging Henry as sole supreme Head of the Church of England, gave him absolute spiritual jurisdiction. Whatever may have been the intention of the king in requiring the acknowledgment from the clergy, it seems absolutely certain that the ruling powers in the Church considered that by their grant there was no derogation of the Pope’s spiritual jurisdiction.

A comparison of the clauses required by Henry with those actually granted by Convocation makes it evident that any admission that the crown had any cure of souls, that is, spiritual jurisdiction, was specifically guarded against. In place of the clause containing the words, “cure of souls committed to his Majesty,” proposed in the king’s name to his clergy, they adopted the form, “the nation committed to his Majesty.” The other royal demands were modified in the same manner,

¹¹⁹ Lancelot Ridley, *Commentary in Englyshe on Sayncte Paule’s Epystle to the Ephesians*, L. 4.

and it is consequently obvious that all the insertions proposed by the crown were weighed with the greatest care by skilled ecclesiastical jurists in some two and thirty sessions, and the changes introduced by them with the proposals made on behalf of the king throw considerable light upon the meaning which Convocation intended to give to the *Supremum Caput* clause. In one sense, perhaps not the obvious one, but one that had *de facto* been recognised during Catholic ages, the sovereign was the Protector – the *advocatus*– of the Church in his country, and to him the clergy would look to protect his people from the introduction of heresy and for maintenance in their temporalities. So that whilst, on the one hand, the king and Thomas Cromwell may well have desired the admission of Henry’s authority over “the English Church, whose Protector and supreme Head he alone is,” to cover even spiritual jurisdiction, on the other hand, Warham and the English Bishops evidently did intend it to cover only an admission that the king had taken all jurisdiction in temporals, hitherto exercised by the Pope in England, into his own hands.

Moreover, looking at what was demanded and at what was granted by the clergy, there is little room for doubt that they at first deliberately eliminated any acknowledgment of the Royal jurisdiction. This deduction is turned into a certainty by the subsequent action of Archbishop Warham. He first protested that the admission was not to be twisted in “derogation of the Roman Pontiff or the Apostolic See,” and the very last act of his life

was the drafting of an elaborate exposition, to be delivered in the House of Lords, of the impossibility of the king's having spiritual jurisdiction, from the very nature of the constitution of the Christian Church. Such jurisdiction, he claimed, belonged of right to the Roman See.¹²⁰

That the admission wrung from the clergy in fact formed the thin end of the wedge which finally severed the English Church from the spiritual jurisdiction of the Holy See is obvious. But the "thin end" was, there can be hardly any doubt, the temporal aspect of the authority of the Roman See; and that its insertion at all was possible may be said in greater measure to be due to the fact that the exercise of jurisdiction in temporals by a foreign authority had long been a matter which many Englishmen had strongly resented.

¹²⁰ This important paper was printed for the first time in the *Dublin Review*, April 1894, pp. 390-420.

CHAPTER V

CLERGY AND LAITY

It is very generally asserted that on the eve of the Reformation the laity in England had no particular love or respect for churchmen. That there were grave difficulties and disagreements between the two estates is supposed to be certain. On the face of it, however, the reason and origin of what is frequently called “the grudge” of laymen against the ecclesiastics is obviously much misunderstood. Its extent is exaggerated, its origin put at an earlier date than should be assigned to it, and the whole meaning of the points at issue interpreted quite unnecessarily as evidence of a popular and deep-seated disbelief in the prevailing ecclesiastical system. To understand the temper of people and priest in those times, it is obviously necessary to examine into this question in some detail. We are not without abundant material in the literature of the period for forming a judgment as to the relations which then existed between the clerical and lay elements in the State. Fortunately, not only have we assertions on the one side and on the other as to the questions at issue, but the whole matter was debated at the time in a series of tracts by two eminent laymen. This discussion was carried on between an anonymous writer, now recognised as the lawyer, Christopher Saint-German, and Sir Thomas More himself.

Christopher Saint-German, who is chiefly known as the writer of a *Dyalogue in English between a Student of Law and a Doctor of Divinity*, belonged to the Inner Temple, and was, it has already been said, a lawyer of considerable repute. About the year 1532, a tract from his pen called *A treatise concerning the division between the spiritualtie and temporaltie* appeared anonymously. To this Sir Thomas More, who had just resigned the office of Chancellor, replied in his celebrated *Apology*, published in 1533. Saint-German rejoined in the same year with *A Dyalogue between two Englishmen, whereof one is called Salem and the other Bizance*, More immediately retorting with the *Debellacyon of Salem and Bizance*. In these four treatises the whole matter of the supposed feud between the clergy and laity is thrashed out, and the points at issue are clearly stated and discussed.

Christopher Saint-German's position is at first somewhat difficult to understand. By some of his contemporaries he was considered to have been tainted by "the new teaching" in doctrinal matters, which at the time he wrote was making some headway in England. He himself, however, professes to write as a loyal believer in the teaching of the Church, but takes exception to certain ecclesiastical laws and customs which in his opinion are no necessary part of the system at all. In these he thinks he detects the cause of the "division that had risen between the spiritualtie and the temporaltie." Sir Thomas More, it may be remarked, is always careful to treat the writer as if he believed him to be a sincere Catholic, though mistaken in

both the extent of the existing disaffection to the Church and altogether impracticable in the remedies he suggested. In some things it must, however, be confessed, granting Saint-German's facts, that he shows weighty grounds for some grievance against the clergy on the part of the laity.

The treatise concerning the division begins by expressing regret at the unfortunate state of things which the author pre-supposes as existing in England when he wrote in 1532, contrasting it with what he remembered before. "Who may remember the state of this realm now in these days," he writes, "without great heaviness and sorrow of heart? For whereas, in times past, there has reigned charity, meekness, concord, and peace, there now reigns envy, pride, division, and strife, and that not only between laymen and churchmen, but also between religious and religious, and between priests and religious, and what is more to be lamented also between priests and priests. This division has been so universal that it has been a great (cause of) disquiet and a great breach of charity through all the realm."¹²¹

It must be confessed that if this passage is to be taken as it stands, the division would appear to have been very widely spread at the time. Sir Thomas More, whilst denying that the difficulty was so great as Saint-German would make out, admits that in late years the spirit had grown and was still growing apace. He holds, however, that Saint-German's reasons for its existence are not

¹²¹ *A treatise concerning the division between the spiritualtie and temporalitie*. London: Robert Redman, f. 2.

the true ones, and that his methods will only serve to increase the spirit of division. As regards the quarrels between religious, at which Saint-German expresses his indignation, he says: "Except this man means here by religious folk, either women and children with whose variances the temporality is not very much disturbed, or else the lay brethren, who are in some places of religion, and who are neither so many nor so much esteemed, that ever the temporality was much troubled at their strife, besides this there is no variance between religious and religious with which the temporality have been offended."¹²² Again: "Of some particular variance among divers persons of the clergy I have indeed heard, as sometimes one against another for his tithes, or a parson against a religious place for meddling with his parish, or one place of religion with another upon some such like occasions, or sometime some one religious (order) have had some question and dispute as to the antiquity or seniority of its institution, as (for instance) the Carmelites claim to derive their origin from Elias and Eliseus: and some question has arisen in the Order of Saint Francis between the Observants and the Conventuals (for of the third company, that is to say the Colettines, there are none in this realm). But of all these matters, as far as I have read or remember, there were never in this realm either so very great or so many such (variances) all at once, that it was ever at the time

¹²² *English Works*, p. 871. In the quotations made from the works of Sir Thomas More and other old writings, for the sake of the general reader the modern form of spelling has been adopted, and at times the words transposed to ensure greater clearness.

remarked through the realm and spoken of as a great and notable fault of the whole clergy.” Particular faults and petty quarrels should not be considered the cause of any great grudge against the clergy at large. “And as it is not in reason that it should be, so in fact it is not so, as may be understood from this:” . . . “if it were the case, then must this grudge of ours against them have been a very old thing, whereas it is indeed neither so great as this man maketh out, nor grown to so great (a pass) as it is, but only even so late as Tyndale’s books and Frith’s and Friar Barnes’ began to go abroad.”¹²³

Further, in several places Sir Thomas More emphatically asserts that the talking against the clergy, the hostile feeling towards them, and the dissensions said to exist between them and lay folk generally, were only of very recent origin, and were at worst not very serious. “I have, within these four or five years (for before I heard little talk of such things),” he writes, “been present at such discussions in divers good companies, never talking in earnest thereof (for as yet I thank God that I never heard such talk), but as a pass-time and in the way of familiar talking, I have heard at such times some in hand with prelates and secular priests and religious persons, and talk of their lives, and their learning, and of their livelihood too, and as to whether they were such, that it were better to have them or not to have them. Then touching their livelihood (it was debated), whether it might be lawfully taken away from them or no; and if it might, whether it were

¹²³ Ibid., p. 875.

expedient for it to be taken, and if so for what use.”¹²⁴

To this Saint-German replies at length in his *Salem and Bizance*, and says that Sir Thomas More must have known that the difficulties had their origin long before the rise of the new religious views, and were not in any sense founded upon the opinions of the modern heretics.¹²⁵ More answers by reasserting his position that “the division is nothing such as this man makes it, and is grown as great as it is only since Tyndale’s books and Frith’s and Friar Barnes’ began to be spread abroad.” And in answer to Saint-German’s suggestion that he should look a little more closely into the matter, he says: “Indeed, with better looking thereon I find it somewhat otherwise. For I find the time of such increase as I speak of much shorter than I assigned, and that by a great deal. For it has grown greater” by reason of “the book upon the division,” which Saint-German with the best of intentions had circulated among the people.¹²⁶

Putting one book against the other, it would appear then tolerably certain that the rise of the anti-clerical spirit in England must be dated only just before the dawn of the Reformation, when the popular mind was being stirred up by the new teachers against the clergy. There seems, moreover, no reason to doubt the positive declaration of Sir Thomas More, who had every means

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 882.

¹²⁵ *Salem and Bizance. A dialogue betwixte two Englishmen, whereof one was called Salem and the other Bizance.* London: Berthelet, 1533, f. 5.

¹²⁶ *English Works*, p. 934.

of knowing, that the outcry was modern – so modern indeed that it was practically unknown only four or five years before 1533, and that it originated undoubtedly from the dissemination of Lutheran views and teachings by Tyndale and others. It is useful to examine well into the grounds upon which this anti-clerical campaign was conducted, and to note the chief causes of objection to the clergy which are found set forth by Saint-German in his books. In the first place: “Some say,” he writes, that priests and religious “keep not the perfection of their order,” and do not set that good example to the people “they should do.” Some also work for “their own honour, and call it the honour of God, and rather covet to have rule over the people than to profit the people.” Others think more about their “bodily ease and worldly wealth and meat and drink,” and the like, even more than lay people do. Others, again, serve God “for worldly motives, to obtain the praise of men, to enrich themselves and the like, and not from any great love of God.”

Such is the first division of the general accusations which Saint-German states were popularly made against the clergy in 1532. Against these may be usefully set Sir Thomas More’s examination of the charges, and his own opinion as to the state of the clergy. In his previous works he had, he says, forbore to use words unpleasant either to the clergy or laity about themselves, though he had “confessed what is true, namely, that neither were faultless.” But what had offended “these blessed brethren,” the English followers of Luther, was that “I have

not hesitated to say, what I also take for the very truth, that as this realm of England has, God be thanked, as good and praiseworthy a temporality, number for number, as any other Christian country of equal number has had, so has it had also, number for number, compared with any other realm of no greater number in Christendom, as good and as commendable a clergy. In both there have never been wanting plenty of those who have always been ‘naught’; but their faults have ever been their own and should not be imputed to the whole body, neither in the spirituality nor temporality.”¹²⁷

Turning to the special accusation made by Saint-German that ecclesiastics “do not keep the perfection of their order,” More grants that this may “not be much untrue.” For “Man’s duty to God is so great that very few serve Him as they should do.”...“But, I suppose, they keep it now at this day much after such a good metely manner as they did in the years before, during which this division was never dreamed of, and therefore those who say this is the cause have need to go seek some other.”¹²⁸ To the second point his reply is equally clear. It is true, More thinks, that some ecclesiastics do look perhaps to their own honour and profit, but, he asks, “were there never any such till so lately as the beginning of this division, or are all of them like this now?” No doubt there are some such, and “I pray God that when any new ones shall come they may prove no worse. For of these, if

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 870.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 877.

they wax not worse before they die, those who shall live after them may, in my mind, be bold to say that England had not their betters any time these forty years, and I dare go for a good way beyond this too. But this is more than twenty years, and ten before this division” (between the clergy and laity) was heard of.¹²⁹ Further, as far as his own opinion goes, although there may be, and probably are, some priests and religious whom the world accounts good and virtuous, who are yet at heart evil-minded, this is no reason to despise or condemn the whole order. Equally certain is it that besides such there are “many very virtuous, holy men indeed, whose holiness and prayer have been, I verily believe, one great special cause that God has so long held His hand from letting some heavier stroke fall on the necks of those whether in the spirituality or temporality who are naught and care not.”¹³⁰

In his *Apology*, Sir Thomas More protested against the author of the work on the *Division* translating a passage from the Latin of John Gerson, about the evil lives of priests; and on Saint-German excusing himself in his second book, More returns to the point in *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance*. More had pleaded that his opponent had dragged the faults of the clergy into light rather than those of the laity, because if the priests led good lives, as St. John Chrysostom had said, the whole Church would be in a good state; “and if they were corrupt, the faith

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 877.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 878.

and virtue of the people fades also and vanishes away.” “Surely, good readers,” exclaims More, “I like these words well.” They are very good, and they prove “the matter right well, and very true is it, nor did I ever say the contrary, but have in my *Apology* plainly said the same: that every fault in a spiritual man is, by the difference of the person, far worse and more odious to God and man than if it were in a temporal man.” And indeed the saying of St. Chrysostom “were in part the very cause that made me write against his (*i. e.* Saint-German’s) book. For assuredly, as St. Chrysostom says: ‘If the priesthood be corrupt, the faith and virtue of the people fades and vanishes away.’ This is without any question very true, for though St. Chrysostom had never said it, our Saviour says as much himself. ‘Ye are (saith He to the clergy) the salt of the earth.’ ... But, I say, since the priesthood is corrupted it must needs follow that the faith and virtue of the people fades and vanishes away, and on Christ’s words it must follow that, if the spirituality be nought, the temporality must needs be worse than they. I, upon this, conclude on the other side against this ‘Pacifier’s’ book, that since this realm has (as God be thanked indeed it has) as good and as faithful a temporality (though there be a few false brethren in a great multitude of true Catholic men) as any other Christian country of equal size has, it must needs, I say, follow that the clergy (though it have some such false evil brethren too) is not so sorely corrupted as the book of *Division* would make people think, but on their side they are

as good as the temporality are on theirs.”¹³¹

On one special point Saint-German insists very strongly. As it is a matter upon which much has been said, and upon which people are inclined to believe the worst about the pre-Reformation clergy, it may be worth while to give his views at some length, and then take Sir Thomas More’s opinion also on the subject. It is on the eternal question of the riches of the Church, and the supposed mercenary spirit which pervaded the clergy. “Some lay people say,” writes Saint-German, “that however much religious men have disputed amongst themselves as to the pre-eminence of their particular state in all such things as pertain to the maintenance of the worldly honour of the Church and of spiritual men, which they call the honour of God, and in all such things as pertain to the increase of the riches of spiritual men, all, religious or secular, agree as one.” For this reason it is found that religious men are much more earnest in trying to induce people to undertake and support such works as produce money for themselves, such as trentals, chantries, obits, pardons, and pilgrimages, than in insisting upon the payments of debts, upon restitution for wrong done, or upon works of mercy “to their neighbours poor and needy – sometimes in extreme necessity.”¹³²

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 937, 938.

¹³² *A treatise concerning the division*, f. 8.

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