

purposeful dream. "Face to face with the idea of beauty and pleasure" lay, like a counter-charm, another ideal—the ideal of "purity, truth, and duty." Simply, quietly, unaffectedly, he lived—*that*.

E. H. BLAKENEY.

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THE REFORMATION.

I.

THE salient characteristics of the fifteenth century in Europe are transition and secularity. This must be grasped firmly, if we would understand the course of events in the English Reformation.

Every age is transitional. Even when changes seem most abrupt, there is, in God's providence, a period of gradual preparation in the life of a community as in the life of each member of it individually. But the fifteenth century is more than others essentially an age of transition. It is the deathbed of feudalism, of mediævalism; it ushers in a new condition of things in Church and State. New forces were coming into existence; a new class was being formed between serfs and nobles; towns and townsmen knew and felt their growing importance. The great religious orders, the salt of the earth in their conception, had lost their savours. Not the monks only, but even the friars, a protest at first against the decay of monastic austerity, had succumbed to the world. The most powerful of all the religious orders, the subtlest influence of all, was not yet in being. The twin discoveries of a new hemisphere and of a new way of diffusing literature, with the renaissance of the poetry and philosophy of ancient Greece, made a revolution in men's modes of thought. The new schools of learning springing up everywhere—the Universities of Florence, Freiburg, Treves, Louvain, Caen, Poitiers, Bordeaux, Bourges, Saragossa, St. Andrew's, etc.—provided a congenial seed-plot for the germs floating in the air. The several nations of Europe were claiming, for good or for evil, their independence of the ties which had bound them together into one Christendom under one dictatorial see. The capture by the Turks of the city, which had been the chief centre of Eastern Christianity, widened the gulf between East and West, not merely by breaking off negotiations, which seemed not unlikely to end in reunion, but by withdrawing the Greek Church further from contact with Europe. All over the

Continent sectaries of all sorts were swarming like the clouds of insects which fill the air before the storm bursts.

To follow the march of events in the English Church we must observe what was taking place in other parts of Europe. There is always a mutual force of action and reaction. On the Continent, as in England, severity, even ferocity, against error in doctrine went hand in hand with laxity of moral discipline. Huss,<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding the Emperor's promise of protection, was burnt alive at Constance; and though Wiclif,<sup>2</sup> strange to say, was allowed to end his days quietly in his rectory at Lutterworth, not a few of his followers died at the stake.

The history of the three Councils—Pisa, Constance, Basle—is disappointing. Their avowed purpose was a reformation of abuses, social and ecclesiastical. The result was to place the Pope more firmly on his throne. The prestige of Rome had been shaken by the seventy years of exile at Avignon, the "Babylonian Captivity," and by the Great Schism, culminating in three rival claimants for the Papacy. When, at the close of the Council of Constance,<sup>3</sup> the Emperor Sigismund walked on foot beside the Pontiff on his palfrey amid the acclamations of some 40,000 lookers-on, it might almost seem as if the days of Hildebrand at Canossa were come again; and when Martin V. (of the great Colonna family) in 1470, entered Rome in triumphal procession along the Via Sacra, it seemed a new lease of supremacy for him and his successors. But the work of disintegration was going on, especially in Hungary, Bohemia, and Northern Germany, preparing the way for the Augustinian friar soon coming to shake Europe. The Councils (England was represented at Constance by Bishop Hallam of Salisbury, and others) were abortive for a reconstruction of Christendom; and the cause of their futility was, as too often in the history of the Church, the intrusion of mundane ambitions and mundane intrigues into loftier aims and purer aspirations. Cardinal D'Ailly and Jean Chantier, the famous Chancellor of the University of Paris, better known from Gerson, his birthplace, find their parallel in Dupanloup and Dollinger at the Vatican Council in our own day. In 1431 we see Council against Council, as Pope

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<sup>1</sup> The teaching of Huss and Jerome lived on through the long Hussite Wars in Bohemia, though their disciples split into two parties—Calixtines (the name explain itself) and more austere Taborites. The gentle, peace-loving Moravians, who for a time fascinated John Wesley, were from this root.

<sup>2</sup> Probably shielded by John of Gaunt.

<sup>3</sup> The Council of Constance was, in one aspect, a struggle between North and South, the Teutonic and the Latin races, the representatives of England siding at first with those of Germany against Italy and Spain.

against Pope. At Rome, Rienzi had shattered the power of the nobles, as the Wars of the Roses shattered the great baronial houses in England. But the turbulence of the populace still made Rome an uneasy home for the Popes. The Medici, Visconti, etc., were enthroning themselves in Northern and Central Italy, like the "Tyranni" in ancient Greece.

In many ways our Church and nation in the earlier part of the fifteenth century were in touch with Bohemia. Jerome, of Prague, had been a student at Oxford and carried back to his country the teachings of Wiclif. The Queen of Richard II., Anne of Bohemia, favoured the Lollards. But their tenets were condemned in Councils at Oxford and London. In Scotland they gained ground, preparing the way for John Knox and Calvinism. In England, for the first time in our history, dissentients from the faith paid the penalty with their lives. The statute passed in 1401, *heretico comburendo*, was, indeed, of older date, but had not been enforced. The fires, which blazed in Smithfield in the next century, were kindled for the Lollards, probably as much on account of their communistic tendencies as for reasons of theology. William Sawtree, a London Rector, was burnt there in 1400 by order of King and Parliament. Lord Cobham, more famous as Sir John Oldcastle, a leading Lollard, was suspected of treason, and though Henry V. wished to spare so distinguished a soldier, for reason of policy he consented to his execution. Pecock, Bishop of Chichester, was deposed (1458) and died in prison at Cardiff, for a sympathy with some, at least, of the Wicliffite notions, which anticipated the Reformation of the ensuing century. Henry IV. owed much to the clergy, for their support, when as Bolingbroke, he contended for the crown; and he paid his debt by sanctioning severities against the Lollards. His gallant son, when Prince of Wales, had interceded for John Bradby, who was being fastened to the stake while he was passing by; but as King he pursued the same policy as his father. Henry VI., personally a very devout Churchman, had neither the will nor the power to carry his devotion into affairs of State, and the Civil War for a time stopped the persecution. Under Edward IV. fire and faggot were again in vogue. Henry VII. supported the Church against heresy.

As in the great French Revolution, so it was in England in the fifteenth century. The higher ecclesiastics, the Courtenays, Arundels, Chicheleys set their faces against the Lollards and their levelling notions, while some of the rank and file of the clergy, like Ball, the "Mad Priest" of Kent, abetted the movement. The peasantry, like the Jacquerie in France, were awakening to a sense, intensified by the miseries of the

“Black Death,” of their grievances and of their strength. In the end of the fourteenth century, led by Wat Tyler, and in the middle of the next century under Jack Cade, they seemed for the moment to gain the upper hand in the Eastern Counties. London was in peril. Simon, Bishop of Norwich, a militant prelate, was one of the foremost and fiercest in suppressing the revolt. On the other side, Wiclif’s “Poor Priests” were busy in counteracting the influence of the friars.

Though the Henries in this and the next century abetted the Church in putting down heresy, they were, like most of their predecessors, resolute against the encroachments of Rome. The intrusion of Legates was resented. The Popes endeavoured to outflank the opposition of King and people by nominating English prelates to act in this capacity. Thus Martin V. made Henry Beaufort, of Winchester, Cardinal and Legate; but Henry V. protested, not in vain, and suppressed the alien priories. His father, notwithstanding his obligation to the clergy for assisting to raise him to the throne, executed Scrope, Archbishop of York, a prince-prelate of Northern England, for treason and rebellion, much to the displeasure of Rome. The Mendicant Friars were forbidden by statute (1402) to entice children from their homes.

Secularity—the bane of Christianity since the days of Constantine, the insidious foe in ambush more to be dreaded than the assault of overt opponents—was more than ever cankering the life of the Church in this period. As usual, the evil was a corruption of what in itself was, to say the least, excusable. At a time when barons and knights could not sign their names, ecclesiastics naturally had to be chancellors and statesmen. But the habit continued after the occasion for it had ceased, and when the chief pastor of the diocese was away in London, entangled in worldly business, his clergy were likely enough to follow the example. Henry IV., in 1415, applied to the University of Oxford to institute a Commission to inquire into clerical abuses. The reports of this Commission and of Archbishop Bourchier’s inquiry in 1475 are painful.

As in the eighteenth century, which in many ways offers a counterpart to the fifteenth, the alliance in England of Church and State against Dissent and the prominent part played in politics by clergymen were not conducive to spirituality in religion. The Bishops of the fifteenth century, with their venerable beards, were too often men of the world rather than men of God. The motley group of dignitaries who journey in Chaucer’s graphic pages from Eastcheap to Canterbury are, with scarcely an exception, not the sort of people to inspire reverence for the Church. The pompous retinue of

Wolsey recalls the embassy of Becket to France. Langland's rhapsody on the Malvern Hills a little before this period, the "Vision of Piers Plowman," shows that the Church was already losing her hold on the people. A preacher at St. Paul's Cross near the close of the fifteenth century inveighed against the laxity of the clergy. The London clergy, he said, dressed like laymen, and this at a time when distinctions of dress were more marked than now. Even those who had vowed more emphatically than others to renounce the world had yielded to its allurements. Abbots and Priors, with their hawks and hounds, lived like our country gentry in the days when agriculture prospered. The architecture of the day, with its horizontal lines, tells the same story. In Scotland this decadence of Church discipline is said to have been even worse than in the southern part of our island, provoking before long the fierce denunciations of Knox and his preachers. In Wales the bilingual difficulty, as in our own experience, hindered the work of the Church, many of the monasteries being English.

## II.

The Reformation of England has been said to begin with Henry VIII.'s quarrel with Rome about his divorce, and to end with the passing of the Act of Uniformity after the Restoration. More truly it may be dated from the Battle of Bosworth Field to the death of Queen Elizabeth. In either case the period is too long and the events are too complex, too far-reaching in their consequences, to permit anything more in these few pages than an attempt to indicate the salient features of the modification effected then in our national Church.

In the annals of the See of Worcester during the first quarter of the fifteenth century four Italian names succeed one another without a break in the list of Bishops. One is the famous Florentine name, De Medici. The next name in the list is the name of Hugh Latimer. In these few lines we have an epitome of the English Reformation, the causes which brought it on, the consequences which flowed out of it.

One of the greatest of our Church historians, the late Bishop of London, regarded the English Reformation as primarily and essentially a social movement. Social it was certainly; it was also political and doctrinal. Political circumstances forced open the outlet for the waters at a particular moment; their volume was swelled by social considerations; but, after all, it was from hidden springs of belief

and conduct deep down in the life and conscience of the nation that the rush of the stream proceeded.

It is important to notice in each one of these several aspects of the Reformation how the law of continuity fulfilled itself. Socially, politically, doctrinally, the sixteenth century was the evolution of the centuries preceding. As in the life of the individual, so in the history of a nation or of the Church, nothing is really sudden, abrupt, incalculable. The Divine Providence is continually shaping and marshalling the course of cause and effect. The change which came over our Church and nation in the sixteenth century was reformation, not revolution.

Constitutionally, the Reformation was the enfranchisement of the English Church from Rome. The masterful self-will of Henry VIII., the most autocratic of our sovereigns, struck the decisive blow which severed England from subjection to the Papacy, but in almost every previous reign King and people had protested strongly against this subjection. The opening words of the Great Charter of our liberties were "*Libera est Ecclesia Anglicana.*" Parliaments with monarchs from the first Edward downwards made laws, not always easy of enforcement, against Papal intrusion and interference. The immediate occasion for the disruption may be found in the unscrupulous selfishness of Henry and in the Pope's fear of offending the German Emperor; but the way had been prepared and facilitated by the stalwart Teutonic perseverance of those who, in the generations past, had asserted manfully the freedom of their island home from bondage to Italy. The Reformation was politically the emancipation of England from Rome, as it was intellectually the enfranchisement of thought for full and free inquiry in every direction.

In a singularly lucid and dispassionate exposition, Archdeacon Bevan sums up the constitutional changes in these words: "The relations of Church and State, though modified by Reformation legislation, were fundamentally the same." He shows, in a concise but exhaustive review of the Tudor enactments affecting the "establishment," that, in claiming to be supreme over the temporalities of the Church, the Sovereign was simply revindicating an authority which had been usurped, not without many a sturdy protest from England, by the See of Rome. The Archdeacon quotes, for instance, from the Act relating to first-fruits the emphatic words, "*the King's majesty is now recognised, as he always indeed hath heretofore been, the only supreme head.*"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "What was Done at the Reformation," by the Venerable W. L. Bevan, Archdeacon of Brecon, Lampeter.

As to the external relations of our island with the continental kingdoms, just as the Norman Conquest had drawn England into closer contact with them, so the Reformation tended inevitably to withdraw England from co-operation with Southern Europe, and to throw the weight of her influence on the side of the Teutonic races.

Socially, too, the seeds of the changes of the sixteenth century were sown on English soil in the century before. The shattering of the power of the Barons by the Wars of the Roses, the growing importance of burghers in our towns, of yeomen in the rural districts, paved the way for the suppression of abbeys and priories, closely linked as these had become with feudalism. This suppression is the keynote of the social change brought about by the Reformation. This transformed, not the face of things only, but the social life and habits of the nation. It must be distinguished carefully in our thoughts from the essence of the Reformation. For monastic institutions from the first were an excrescence, not an integral part of the Catholic Church, though in course of time they came to be largely identified with it. In seizing their revenues, the King, however rapacious and oppressive was the action of Cromwell and his agents, was not really seizing Church property nor touching rights and privileges of the established Church. Still, the suppression of the monastic system was potent socially, both as concurrent cause and as result of the Reformation.

Abbots and priors, lapsing from the austerity of their Benedictine and Cistercian rules, had degenerated into secularity, and were living often as great lords or as the country gentlemen of a succeeding age. They were generally kind landlords, good agriculturists, as well as lavish alms-givers. But it was a reposeful and indolent régime, and when the rich meadows and broad cornfields passed into other hands, when the Russells and other new families built up their fortunes on the ruins of abbeys and castles, a great impulse was given to commercial activities and to the maritime enterprize of men like Drake and Hawkins, the patriotic pirates of Queen Elizabeth.

But the springs of action in the affairs of men lie deeper far than legal enactments or even the lust of power or money. Even those who avow their own indifference to creeds have to acknowledge, after all, that religion has ever been a momentous agency in the history of the world. In its moral and spiritual aspect, which is indeed the essential aspect of the Reformation, there is, as in the political and social aspects, unquestionable evidence of the law of continuity.

The vital principle of the Reformation, doctrinally and practically, was the free, direct, unhindered, access of the soul

to Christ. Ordinances, originally intended to assist the soul to draw near to Him, had degenerated into barriers between the soul and the Saviour. In each of the questions which divided England and Rome, this underlies the controversy. It is against the attempt to substitute another person or another thing in the place of the One Only Mediator, that the Reformation is an unflinching protest. But, while protesting against the accretions of mediævalism, the Prayer-Book retains, not in spirit merely, but often in the very words of the formulary, the Revelation of God in Christ, transmitted from the Apostolic Church. Doctrinally, as well as socially and politically, the sixteenth century in England (it cannot be repeated too often, too earnestly), whatever it may have been elsewhere, was strictly and essentially a Re-formation, not the daring quest of "fresh woods and pastures new."

In these few pages it is not possible to try to delineate the characters of the principal actors in the drama; and yet the study of character is the most interesting, as it is the most instructive, chapter in history. It will be admitted generally by thoughtful and unbiassed students that of all the persons concerned in the English Reformation the most eminent and most characteristic is Cranmer. Hugh Latimer—genial, homely, outspoken—may represent what is often called the "John Bullism" of our nation; but in the serene reasonableness of our Prayer-Book, in the tenderness of its sympathies, in its undemonstrative reverence, above all in its conservation of all that could rightly be retained, we trace the influence of the man, who, despite his failings, stands first and foremost of our Reformers.

I. GREGORY SMITH.

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## HISTORY AND FAITH.

THE modern school of historical criticism of the Bible has undoubtedly contributed much to our knowledge and understanding of it, and has thrown valuable side-lights on such problems as the nature of inspiration. But it has not, up to the present, avoided several fundamental mistakes, which vitiate very many of its conclusions. One effect of these is that more conservative believers are apt to distrust all its methods and reject all its conclusions; and this, however unjust, is inevitable: for the generality of people will judge the whole by its result alone, forgetting that one, or a few, unsound principles of application may spoil much valuable work and many sound principles of investigation.