

CHURCH AND STATE IN REFORMATION ENGLAND

by RALPH S. WERRELL

MANY of the problematical features of church life and administration today can be understood better if we pay attention to the situation in which they took shape. Mr. Werrell, Rector of Combs, near Stowmarket, who has already given us evidence of his special interest in the English Reformation by an article on "The Authority of Scripture for the Anglican Reformers" which we published three years ago, now considers in the light of the English Reformation questions of church-state relationship, not least the royal supremacy. Evangelicals in other parts of the British Isles sometimes find it difficult to understand why Anglican Evangelicals take the line they do in such matters as these. Mr. Werrell's paper may help them to understand, if not to approve!

I. INTRODUCTION

THE great difficulty which faces anyone who writes about the English Reformation lies in the fact that things were in a state of flux. As Dr. Trevelyan says:

Those who conceive of opinion in Tudor England as sharply divided between two mutually exclusive and clearly defined parties of Catholic and Protestant, can never understand the actual course taken by the Reformation before the latter years of Elizabeth. Opinion was in the making, not yet made. Honest men, as well as time-servers, were perpetually altering their views. Few held a consistent body of doctrine which would have satisfied the Catholic or Protestant partisans of a later day.¹

The Papacy was being shattered on two fronts. For we must remember that the Church of Rome was a temporal power as well as a spiritual one. There were two things which took place in sixteenth-century England; there was the rise of nationalism which threw off the dominion of foreign powers in this land; there was also the Reformation which shattered Rome's hold over the spiritual life. In casting off the political rule Rome had over this land, Henry VIII had to cast off the spiritual power whilst still maintaining the doctrines which Rome taught, except the Pope's supremacy.

The great danger which faces us is to think that Henry VIII was responsible for the Reformation. However, under no circumstances can we say that a religious reformation took place during his reign.

¹ G. M. Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England* (Pelican, 1959), p. 217.

Although the Pope ceased to have any jurisdiction in this land, yet no reformation had taken place.

The Act of Six Articles had already been passed decreeing death against anyone who denied Transubstantiation, or the necessity of auricular confession and clerical celibacy. A man was hanged in London for eating flesh on Friday. The burning of Protestants proceeded quietly, but with no indecent haste.²

Spiritually the Church remained the same after Henry's legislation as before. John Hooper could write:

As far as true religion is concerned, idolatry is nowhere in greater vigour. Our king has destroyed the pope, but not popery The impious mass, the most shameful celibacy of the clergy, the invocation of saints, auricular confession, superstitious abstinence from meats, and purgatory, were never before held by the people in greater esteem than at the present moment.³

This fact must be borne in mind for a true understanding of the Reformation, otherwise the confused situation which existed in the sixteenth century is even harder to understand. Perhaps nowhere is this danger greater than in the question of the relationship between Church and State. Here also we have the problem of looking at the question through twentieth-century eyes. Today we see that the Church can exist independently of the State, and the State independently of the Church. But to the people of the sixteenth century this was something unimaginable; both stood or fell together.

One thing we have lost sight of today is the doctrine of Society. This is what faced the people of the sixteenth century, and is something which we must rediscover. Whether the doctrine of the Reformers was right or wrong, at least they had a doctrine of Society, and this is what lies behind the principle of the Established Church. The Christian was taught that he was also a member of the State, and the Prince that he had a responsibility to the Church. "In a word," wrote Hooker, "our estate is according to the pattern of God's own ancient elect people, which people was not part of them the commonwealth, and part of them the Church of God, but the selfsame people whole and entire were both under one chief Governor, on whose supreme authority they did all depend."⁴

The doctrine of the Reformers was based on Scripture, and it is to Scripture that we must look, and to their exegesis of the Word of God, if we are to criticize their doctrine. It is all too easy to find faults in the applying of the doctrine. All too often other considera-

² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

³ *Original Letters* (Parker Society, 1846), vol. i, p. 36.

⁴ Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* VIII. i. 7 *Works*, ed. Keble (Oxford, 1845).

tions carried too much weight. At this time other doctrines also were in a state of flux. Today the relationship between Church and State is different from what it was in the reign of Elizabeth I, but if the doctrine was truly drawn from the Scriptures, then the same doctrine must apply today as it did then. We must not go back to Reformation history from an antiquarian point of view, for it is today that we live and not three or four hundred years ago. As we study history "the best Deduction which can be made, is, to look up to, and acknowledge *God*, who only is unchangeable, and to admire his Wisdom and Providence, even in Human Miscarriages: for *Empires*, and *Kingdoms*, and *Common-wealths*, everywhere in the World, have their *Periods*, but the *Histories* thereof remain and live, for the Instruction of *Men*, and the Glory of *God*."⁵ This is, in fact, the Biblical view of history: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition," wrote Paul concerning the history of Israel.⁶

As we turn to our subject let us rid our minds of prejudice, and of pre-conceived ideas of what took place, and of what is meant by the Established Church. We cannot do better than to bear in mind the words of one enemy of the Church of England at the time of the Reformation:

Every man must soundly informe himself, what the doctrine of the Church of England isFor it is apparent that the prejudice which men have against the Doctrine which they (by error) conceive that the Church holdeth, and the obedience which the Church exacteth, causeth them to judge that false or unlawfull, which is not so, and so to refuse it and flee from it as sinfull.⁷

II. THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Although in the mercy and providence of God the hard barren ground was broken up, and the way for the Protestant Reformation was prepared by the legislation of Henry VIII, it is not to his reign, or to his mind that we must look for spiritual revival in the Established Church of this land. Nothing was further from the mind of Henry than to change the religion of England.

To understand the changes which Henry made we must consider the three powers of the Pope as represented by the triple crown, which signifies "the supreme authority of the Pope in spiritual things, his jurisdiction over the Church considered as a human society, and his dominion as a temporal monarch."⁸

⁵ Rushworth, *Preface to Historical Collections* (ed. 1682), A2 verso.

⁶ I Corinthians 10: 11.

⁷ *Cartwrightiana*, ed. Peel and Carlson (Allen and Unwin, 1951), p. 193.

⁸ Mgr. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church* (Longmans, 1960), p. 7.

The first of these powers of the Pope is an usurped power which belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the legislation introduced by Henry this power was restored to its rightful Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Universal Church.

The second was given to the Archbishop to govern and order the spiritual lives of the people, and to rule the Church.

The third power of the Pope was not only over the Papal territories, but the Pope also claimed that he had rule over the whole world, and that kings and princes reigned only by his permission. The result of this was he claimed to be able to absolve the people from their obedience to the sovereign. Thus in 1570 the Papal Bull *Regnans in Excelsis* said, "Moreover we declare her [Elizabeth] to be deprived of her pretended right to the aforesaid realm, and from all dominion, dignity and privilege whatsoever."⁹ It was this power, with regard to England, that Henry claimed for himself as the rightful lord of the welfare of his people.

Before the power of the Pope was removed there were two classes of persons in this land, one could almost say two nations, the clergy and the laity. The laity were subservient to the king, the clergy to the Pope. To a considerable extent the clergy were above the common law of the land, and could claim benefit of clergy, which would exempt them from proceedings in the Crown Courts, and bring them under the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Courts. This would not have been so serious if the Ecclesiastical Courts inflicted the due punishment, but in practice they did not. The state of affairs which existed before the Henrican legislation is expressed in the *Act Concerning Convicts in Petit Treason, Murther, etc.*:

Where at a Parliament holden at Westminster in the third year of King Edward the first, the same King moved the Prelates of the Realm, and them enjoyned upon their faith that they owed to him, that in no wise they should deliver those clerks which were indicted for felony, without due purgation, so that the said King should have no need to put other remedy in that behalf. And that notwithstanding, after that monition, divers and may Clerks convict were accustomedly delivered and suffered to make their purgation, to the great courage of evil-doers But continually sithen that time, manifest thieves and murderers indicted, and found guilty of their misdeeds by good and substantial Inquests, upon plain and proveable evidence before the King's Justices, and afterwards by the usages of the common Laws of the Land delivered to the Ordinaries as Clerks convict, be speedily and hastily delivered and set at large by the ministers of the said Ordinaries for corruption and lucre.¹⁰

⁹ Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1959), p. 338.

¹⁰ 23 Henry VIII c.1, s.1, 2. Quoted from Keble, *Statutes at Large* (London, 1676), p. 389.

These laws to control the lawlessness of the clergy could have no effect whilst it was possible to appeal from the King's Courts to the Papal Court. The previous legislation had failed for that reason, but after the legislation of 1532-1534 there could be no appeal from the King's Court. If the clergy objected, there was nothing they could do about it.

Henry moved carefully, but with an assurance and support which enabled him to move swiftly. First, he relied upon reviving the anti-papal legislation of the past which had fallen into disuse. The Canons of William I, the Statute of Carlisle, Statutes of Praemunire, etc., were all revived by Henry. The only new thing was the abolition of papal authority in England, and the taking of the title, "supreme head in earth of the Church of England."¹¹

The time was ripe, and the people were behind Henry. The Lollard movement had been reinforced by Luther's writings, and above all by Tyndale's New Testament. The new learning had also helped to break down the priestly tyranny over the people. Even staunch papists were demanding some sort of reform. The ignorance of the clergy and their immorality were openly attacked. People like Erasmus never missed an opportunity to make fun from the lives of the monks and clergy.

If a Priest lets his Hair grow, or wears a Lay Habit, he is thrown into Prison and severely punished; but if he sits tippling in a Bawdy-house with Whores, games, or debauches other Men's wives, and never takes a Bible in his Hand, he is still a Pillar of the Church.¹²

The spirit of nationalism was abroad, and the attack on things "foreign" brought the people behind Henry. But as yet the time was not ripe for a Reformation. Henry was to dig the ground, and, although reluctantly, to prepare for the sowing of the seed in his son's reign.

It was between the years 1532 and 1534 that Henry accomplished the severing of this realm from the usurped jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, and the king was declared to be sovereign of all estates, both temporal and spiritual.

It is manifestly declared and expressed, that this realm of England is an Empire . . . governed by one supreme Head and King, having the Dignity and Royal Estate of the Imperial Crown of the same: Unto whom a body politick, compact of all sorts and degrees of people, divided in terms and by names of Spirituality and Temporality, been bounden and owen to bear next to God, a natural and humble obedience: He being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God, with plenary, whole, and entire Power,

¹¹ 26 Henry VIII c.1. Gee and Hardy, *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (London, 1910), p. 244.

¹² Erasmus, *Familiar Colloquies*, vol. ii (Gibbings and Co., 1900), p. 290.

Preeminence, Authority, Prerogative, and Jurisdiction, to render and yield Justice, and final determination to all manner of folk, resiants, or subjects within this his Realm, in all Causes, Matters, Debates, and Contentions, happening to occur, insurge, or begin within the limits thereof, without restraint, or provocation to any forain Princes or Potentates of the World.¹³

It is the wording of the Act of Supremacy, 1534, which causes much controversy. But there are two things which we must remember about this Act. First, that it was not passed at or after the Reformation of the English Church, but was enacted whilst the Church was unreformed. Second, that it had a life of only twenty years, being repealed by Mary's Second Act of Repeal, and it was not restored to the Statute Book by Elizabeth. How seldom this is realized can be seen by the fact that a Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford could write: "The Act of Supremacy and the Act ratifying the submission of the clergy were still law, as they still are."¹⁴ However, Elizabeth's Supremacy Act does not mention Henry's Act, which was repealed by Philip and Mary.

And that it may also please your Highness, That it may further be enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all other Laws and Statutes, and the branches and clauses of any Act or Statute repealed and made void by the said Act of Repeal made in the time of the said late King Philip and Queen Mary, and not in this present Act specially mentioned and revived, shall stand, remain, and be repealed and void, in such like manner and form as they were before the making of this Act.¹⁵

Second, Henry's Act of Supremacy states that the King is "supreme head in earth of the Church of England."¹⁶ Henry's power extended only to the government of the Church on earth, and in England. It was a temporal power which meant that his jurisdiction extended over the clergy as well as the laity. The words "in earth" show the limit, for, unlike the Pope, Henry did not claim that his power extended beyond the grave. Positively, Henry was given authority to fulfil his duty as a Christian King.

It was under Edward VI that the Reformation of the Church of England came. Heresy was no longer punishable by death (those who suffered death for heresy in the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I were punished by Order in Council and not by Act of Parliament). But the Supremacy Act was unaltered during his brief reign.

Mary's Second Act of Repeal (1 & 2 Philip & Mary, c. 8) restored the position as it was before the twentieth year of Henry

¹³ 24 Henry VIII c.12 s.1 (Keble).

¹⁴ Powicke, *Reformation in England* (Oxford, 1961), p. 66.

¹⁵ 1 Eliz. I c.1 s. 13 (Keble).

¹⁶ 26 Henry VIII c.1 (Gee and Hardy).

VIII, and the Supremacy Act was annulled. During her reign the papacy was restored to power in this country.

Under Elizabeth the Pope was once more dethroned from having any authority in England, but at the same time the Supremacy Act of Henry VIII was not restored to the Statute Book. There were two differences in Elizabeth's Act of Supremacy (1 Eliz. 1, c. 1): first, in the title which it gave to the Queen, and second, in the administration.

The Act of Supremacy therefore restores to the crown its twice-lost authority, and frees the nation a second time from the "bondage" into which it had fallen. It repeals the reactionary legislation of Mary and revives the anti-papal statutes of Henry VIII. It sweeps away all foreign authority, spiritual and temporal, and it vests in the crown for ever the supreme power over the national church. But it is careful to draw the limits of the power thus given. It does not restore the title of "supreme head" conferred upon Henry VIII, nor does it revive those statutes (e.g., 32 Henry VIII. 26; 34 & 35 Henry VIII. 1) which may almost be said to have endowed him with the authority of Pope and Council combined.¹⁷

In general, this legislation constituted a return to the position established by King Henry VIII with two exceptions. These exceptions, however, were capable of attaining considerable significance according to the manner in which they were used. First, in the queen's style the title Supreme Head was omitted Second, the exercise of the visitatorial powers of the supremacy was delegated to a Commission.¹⁸

After the Northern Rebellion of 1569, Queen Elizabeth defended the position of this Act as follows:

But that authority which is yielded to us and our Crown consisteth in this; that, considering we are by God's grace the Sovereign Prince and Queen next under God, and all the people in our realm are immediately born subjects to us and our Crown and to none else We are by this authority bound to direct all estates, being subject to us, to live in the faith and the obedience of Christian religion, and to see the laws of God and man which are ordained to that end to be duly observed . . . that the Church may be governed and taught by archbishops, bishops, and ministers . . . whom we do assist with our sovereign power, etc. An office and charge as we think properly due to all Christian monarchs, and princes sovereigns, whereby they only differ from pagan princes.¹⁹

As time went on the conflict between the various parties inside and outside the Church of England grew more fierce. No longer

¹⁷ Prothero, *Statutes and Constitutional Documents, 1558-1625* (Oxford, 1906), pp. xxx f.

¹⁸ R. E. Head, *Royal Supremacy and the Trial of Bishops* (Church Historical Soc., 1962), p. 2.

¹⁹ *Queen Elizabeth's Defence of her Proceedings . . .*, ed. Collins (C.H.S., 1958), pp. 45 f.

was it the Anabaptists and other heretical sects who advocated dis-established churches. The Separatists taught the co-existence of Church and State, not as one unified body, but as separate bodies. This caused a reaction within the Church, for it was feared that this was the first stage on the way back to Rome. Archbishop Grindal was sequestered for not being severe enough with the Puritans. In the Church of England the power passed to men who would uphold the power of the State, and progress was made towards making the king into almost a Pope.

The power of the Crown increased throughout the reigns of James I and Charles I. In a sermon by Dr. Roger Manwaring it was said

that the king is not bound to observe the Laws of the Realm concerning the Subjects Rights and Liberties, but that his Royal Will and Command in imposing Loans and Taxes, without common consent in Parliament, doth oblige the Subject's Conscience upon pain of eternal damnation. That those who refused to pay this Loan, offended against the Law of God and the King's Supreme Authority, and became guilty of Impiety, Disloyalty, and Rebellion.²⁰

This raised a storm in the House of Commons, and Mr. Rouse spoke against it in the House in May 1628.

There can be no greater mischief to a Prince, than to put the opinion of Deity into his ears; for if from his ears it should have passed to his heart, it had been mortal: You know how *Herod* perished. Now this man gives a participation of Divine Omnipotence to Kings; and though a part may seem to qualify, yet all doth seem again to fill up that qualification, and very dangerously, if we remember that God saith of himself, *I am a jealous God*.²¹

Parliament was opposed to this increase in Royal power, and Manwaring was censured.

Yet the idea did find root in the King's heart, and did prove mortal. The lowest ebb was reached in the Constitutions of 1640 when it was proclaimed that

The most High and Sacred Order of Kings, is of Divine Right, being the Ordinance of God Himself, founded in the prime Laws of Nature, and clearly established by express texts both of the Old and New Testaments. A Supreme Power is given to this most excellent Order by God Himself in the Scriptures The care of God's Church is committed to Kings in the Scripture . . . therefore her Government belongs in chief unto Kings.²²

After the Commonwealth the later Stuarts had not learnt the lesson of history, and James II, like Charles I, claimed very great powers to himself, and also lost his crown.

²⁰ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. i, p. 423.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 586.

²² *Sparrow's Articles. Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical*, 1640 (edn. London, 1846).

III. THE DOCTRINE OF ROYAL SUPREMACY

It was to the Word of God that the Reformers turned, and it was from that source that they found the grounds for the relationship between the Church and State. Criticism must therefore be made by showing that their exegesis was wrong, and not by charges of Erastianism, or by criticisms of the spiritual state of the Prince. This is very often ignored, and although the Reformers' exegesis is passed by, people do not fail to attack their doctrine on non-biblical grounds. But to do so is to place man's reason above God's revelation.

A ruler, whether he is a Christian or not, has a duty towards his subjects, and they towards him. It is untrue to say "That the king is not bound to observe the Laws of the Realm concerning the Subjects Rights and Liberties."²³ He has a duty, and the Christian prince has a greater duty in a way than others.

What then are the duties of Rulers? "The powers that be are ordained of God"; this could even be said of the pagan Roman government, and Paul even goes farther: "he is a minister of God to thee for good." Three times Paul calls the magistrate "the minister of God."²⁴ Here all must agree that Paul is using strong language, and if this applies to the heathen Roman government, how much more does it apply to one who professes to be a Christian!

The Christian is therefore to submit himself to every ordinance of man, whether this be of a king, or of a governor. For rulers are given by God to maintain government in both the correcting of evil-doers, as well as encouraging those who do well.²⁵

In the New Testament we have the general doctrine of government, but there is nothing specific about the duties of Christian kings. The reason for this is not hard to find, for there were no Christian governors in those days.

When we seek the duties of the Christian king it is to the Old Testament that we must turn. Henry, as the temporal ruler, exercised the voice of the laity in the Church. In his days this was a valid argument since England was emerging from feudalism, and democracy had not yet become a political force. However, the growth of democracy, although this affects in some measure the power which is exercised by the Christian prince, does not alter the relationship which should exist between the Church and State.

The Christian prince differs from the heathen one in that he has

²³ Rushworth, vol. i, p. 423.

²⁴ Romans 13: 1-6.

²⁵ Cf. 1 Peter 2: 14.

a duty towards the Church. This duty towards Christ lies in maintaining the purity of the Church. The king is to be a nursing father, and the queen a nursing mother to the Church (Isaiah 49: 23). Christ is the only Head of the Church, but kings are under Him to uphold, succour, and strengthen the Church. This was not only the position of the English Reformers, but also of Continental ones.

Calvin, in his Commentary on Isaiah 49: 23, says:

Hence it ought to be observed that something remarkable is here demanded from princes, besides an ordinary profession of faith; for the Lord has bestowed on them authority and power to defend the Church and to promote the glory of God. This is indeed the duty of all; but kings, in proportion as their power is greater, ought to devote themselves to it more earnestly, and to labour in it more diligently.²⁶

Again, writing to King Edward VI, Calvin wrote:

It is therefore an inestimable privilege that God has made you, sire, a christian king, to the end that you may act as his vicegerent in maintaining the kingdom of Jesus Christ in England.²⁷

Other Continental Reformers, as Beza, Bullinger, and others, also held this view.²⁸ In England we find this verse being used by Cartwright, Fulke, Jewel, Pilkington, Rogers, and Whitgift, to show the duty of the Christian prince.²⁹

"The Prophet says," wrote Pilkington, "that God made kings and queens to be nurses of his church. The nurse's duty is to feed, guide, and cherish the child; yea, to correct, instruct, and reform him when he does a fault."³⁰ This is, in fact, to govern the people wisely, for the king is to help forward the spiritual well-being of his people as well as their bodily well-being.

The Fifth Commandment was used to teach the place of the magistrate in the ordering of society, both on the Continent and also in England.³¹ As the King's Book expresses it,

And furthermore by this commandment they be bound to obey also all the laws, proclamations, precepts, and commandments, made by their princes and governors, except they be against the commandments of God.³²

²⁶ Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. iv (Eerdmans, 1956), p. 40.

²⁷ *Original Letters*, 1537-1558 (Parker Society, 1847), p. 715.

²⁸ Bèze, *La Confession de Foi du Chrétien*, pp. 147 f. *La Revue Réformée*, p. 147. Bullinger, *Decades*, vol. iv (P.S. edn.), p. 34, Gualter, *Zurich Letters* (second series), (P.S. edn.), p. 9.

²⁹ *A Second Admonition to Parliament: Puritan Manifestoes*, ed. Frère and Douglas (C.H.S., 1954), p. 85; Jewel, *Works*, vol. iii (P.S. edn.) p. 167; Rogers, *On the XXXIX Articles* (P.S. edn.), p. 336; Whitgift, *Works*, vol. iii (P.S. edn.), p. 592.

³⁰ Pilkington (Parker Society edn.), p. 642.

³¹ Calvin, *Harmony of Pentateuch*, iii, pp. 11 f.; Bullinger, P.S., p. 268; Catechism of C. of E.

³² *King's Book* (C.H.S., 1932), p. 104.

There is, therefore, a limit placed upon the laws of a secular power, if they contravene the law of God, then the Christian's duty is to disobey.

Yet let us believe undoubtedly, good Christian people, that we may not obey kings, magistrates, or any other, though they be our own fathers, if they would command us to do any thing contrary to God's commandments. In such a case we ought so say with the Apostles, We must rather obey God than man.³³

The XXXIX Articles are important in this respect since it is by these that the doctrine of the Church of England is to be judged.

Where we attribute to the Queens Majesty the chief Government by which titles we understand the minds of some dangerous folks to be offended: we give not our Princes the ministring either of God's word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also set forth by Elizabeth our Queen, do most plainly testifie: but that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself, that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees, committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers.³⁴

The history of Israel is constantly referred to, and the good and bad effects of the monarchy are used as examples. The Christian prince should follow in the steps of a Josiah. The fate of Uzziah and Herod are dreadful warnings to the prince not to go beyond the bounds God has laid down.

The Injunctions of 1559 spoke out strongly against those who said the Prince was given too much power.

And further, her majesty forbids all manner of her subjects to give ear or credit to such perverse and malicious persons, which most sinisterly and maliciously labour to notify to her loving subjects, how by the words of the said oath it may be collected that the kings and queens of this realm, possessors of the crown, may challenge authority and power of ministry of divine offices in the church.³⁵

IV. THE OPPONENTS OF ROYAL SUPREMACY

Although their motives and their aims were different, both the Papists and the Separatists attacked the Royal Supremacy. Their attacks were so similar that one can understand the fears that separatism would lead to the return of Romanism to this land. Royal Supremacy, uniting the civil and ecclesiastical power, was felt to be the only safeguard against Rome, and to overthrow this, it was felt, meant yielding up the fruits of the Reformation.

That these fears were not without substance can be seen from the similarity of the attack by these two sides.

³³ *Homily on Obedience. Homilies* (S.P.C.K., 1938), p. 117.

³⁴ Article XXXVII. Articles of Religion Anno 1562. Quoted from Sparrow's Articles.

³⁵ Injunctions, 1559 (Gee and Hardy, pp. 438 f.).

Kings and princes, be they never so great . . . they must be subject to some bishop, priest, or other prelate.³⁶

Princes must be servants unto the church, be subject unto the church, submit their sceptres unto the church, and throw down their crowns before the church.³⁷

In the days which followed the reign of Mary it is understandable that men should be fearful of a return to priestly domination. There were also heretical and anarchical sects to contend with. It was felt that the safety of both the church and state depended upon the unity found in the Crown.

The Separatist argued that the doctrine of Royal Supremacy was not found in the Bible, but that the Church and State are separate entities. It is true there is the text from Isaiah, and the example of the monarchy in the Old Testament, but do these teach the doctrine the Church of England sought to draw from them? Even Richard Hooker had to concede:

As for supreme power in ecclesiastical affairs, the word of God doth no where appoint that all kings should have it, neither that any should not have it; for which cause it seemeth to stand altogether by human right, that unto Christian kings there is such dominion given³⁸

But for the advocate, as was Hooker, of Royal Supremacy, to give freedom to the Separatists was either to bring the Pope back, or to place such power in the hands of the clergy that the evils associated with papacy would be once more seen in this land.

The Separatist, however, denied this. Robert Brown wrote:

We say therefore, and often haue taught, concerning our Soueraigne Queene Elizabeth, that neither the Pope, nor other Popeling is to haue anie authoritie either ouer her, or ouer the Church of God, and that the Pope of Rome is Antichrist, whose kingdome ought vtterlie to be taken away. Agayne we say, that her Authoritie is ciuill, and that power she hath as highest under God within her Dominions, and that ouer all persons and causes. By that she may put to death all that deserue it by Lawe, either of the Church or common Wealth.³⁹

Another Separatist, John Greenwood, wrote:

All true Christians within her majestie's dominions acknowledge her majestie to be the supreame majestrate and governess of all persons with in the church, and without the church, yea, over all causes ecclesiasticall and civill; yet allwayes with this caveat, that no flesh

³⁶ Quoted from Test. Rhemes, Heb. 13: 17, in Rogers, *Catholic Doctrine of C. of E.* (Parker Society), p. 339.

³⁷ Quoted Rogers, *ibid.*, p. 340 (T.C. is slightly different, but Rogers is fairly accurate).

³⁸ Hooker, *L.E.P.* VIII. ii. 5 (edn. Keble).

³⁹ *Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, ed. Peel & Carlson (Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 152.

may presume to add anie thing to his word, or diminish anie thing from it. This we make no scruple to affirme.⁴⁰

The Separatists objected to the Elizabethan settlement, but most of them would probably have remained within the Church of England provided further reform had been possible. They felt that Elizabeth was taking too much upon her shoulders in the affairs of the Church, and exceeding the bounds laid down by the Injunctions and Statutes.

Indeed, even Archbishop Grindal accused the Queen of exceeding her powers in his letter to her of December 20, 1576.

I am forced with all humility, and yet plainly, to profess, that I cannot with safe conscience, and without the offence of the majesty of God, give my assent to the suppressing of the said exercises: much less can I send out any injunction for the utter and universal subversion of the same I will draw to an end, most humbly praying the same well to consider these two short petitions following. The first is, that you would refer all these ecclesiastical matters which touch religion, or the doctrine and discipline of the church, unto the bishops and divines of your realm; according to the example of all godly Christian emperors and princes of all ages When your Majesty hath questions of the laws of your realm, you do not decide the same in your court, but send them to your judges to be determined. Likewise for doubts in matters of doctrine or discipline of the church, the ordinary way is to refer the decision of the same to the bishops, and other head ministers of the church The second petition I have to make to your Majesty is this: that, when you deal in matters of faith and religion, or matters that touch the church of Christ, which is his spouse, bought with so dear a price, you would not use to pronounce so resolutely and peremptorily In God's matters all princes ought to bow their sceptres to the Son of God, and to ask counsel at his mouth, what they ought to do.⁴¹

It was after this that Grindal fell from favour and was sequestered.

V. CONCLUSION

It is difficult for us to enter into the mind of Reformation England, for our outlook is so influenced by that of the twentieth century, which, like that of the sixteenth century, is a constantly changing one. The ties of feudalism were being cast off. There were the natural fears caused by the attempts of the Pope to regain England. The fires of the martyrs were still fresh in people's minds. A united nation must face the attacks being made upon its sovereignty, and the question was: How can a nation which is divided spiritually be united temporally?

⁴⁰ *Writings of John Greenwood 1587-1590*, ed. Carlson (Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 125.

⁴¹ *Remains of Archbishop Grindal* (Parker Society edn.), pp. 387-389.

The Elizabethan settlement put compromise in the first place, just as today we tend to do the same thing. But it did not work.

We can learn much from the struggles of the sixteenth century, and many of the pitfalls facing us could be avoided if we learnt from that period of the Church's history.

Neither the Anglican nor the Separatist was right, and one's sympathies go out to Archbishop Grindal.

Today with ecumenism being the force which seems strongest in the Churches of the world, and of this land, we are in danger of falling into the same pitfalls as the sixteenth-century Church.

Today the goal is a united Church, just as it was in the sixteenth century. Where the Church of the Reformation failed, where the bitterness occurred, where schism was caused, is to be seen in those places where the Church departed from the Word of God into expediency.

Unless the Church of today goes back to the period of the Reformation to learn from its mistakes it too will fail to get unity. Today it seems to be going along the paths of compromise and of ambiguity as did the Elizabethan Church, rather than the way of God's eternal truth.

Combs, Stowmarket.