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A Study of Changes in Religious Thought
in
the Church of England,
1660 to 1695.

Thesis

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C O N T E N T S

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P R E F A C E.

Religious developments in the later seventeenth century form, by common consent, a neglected phase of English history. Changes of many kinds affected the Church of England during this period. Regarding most of them I have nothing to say. I have deliberately restricted myself to changes in thought, and the subtitle of this thesis indicates its scope and purpose. I have said nothing about the organized life of the church, or about its government or liturgy. I have even avoided any mention of the change in the favoured style of preaching, though this is closely related to the thought of the Restoration period. I have not discussed the ways in which the ministry of the church was recruited, nor the question of the social position of its clergy. I have not attempted to assess the influence it exercised, though it is nearly a century since Macaulay pointed out that the pulpit was one of the formative of all forces moulding public opinion. The limitation to changes in thought has consequently been deliberate; only a self-imposed restriction of this kind could keep the study within manageable bounds. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that the thesis is not concerned with the history of religious thought in general, but only with those aspects of it wherein changes can clearly be discerned. Consequently, the relatively static forms of Anglican theology have been ignored.

In a subject like this, originality is difficult to define. I undertook the study because of a conviction that the religious thought of the

period had not been adequately treated, and much reading in the literature of the period has not shaken that belief. There are few satisfying histories of any phase of seventeenth century thought, and religious thought has been more neglected than most. Good monographs on individual writers or on movements in theology are equally rare. Even Locke has not been treated with the discernment and distinction which his importance would warrant, and the one notably good study of his philosophy (Professor Gibson's work on "Locke's Theory of Knowledge") was of comparatively little use for my purposes. Though even obsolete works have often supplied occasional suggestive hints, and though I have been helped by comments and observations made by previous students in this field, I have relied throughout primarily on a study of the seventeenth century material. I have felt that what I have tried to do has in most instances not been satisfactorily done elsewhere, and often has not been done on a comparable scale at all. Because I remain convinced that the changes in religious thought in this period have not hitherto been adequately dealt with in any coherent and consecutive way, I venture to hope that this study possesses such measure of originality as can properly be claimed for a work of this kind.

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." The words came often and naturally to the men who had waited for the Restoration and known the bitterness of hope deferred. It is small wonder that the text was a favourite with Anglican preachers, both eminent and obscure. Throughout the Interregnum they had known prolonged frustration; now their humiliation was turned to triumph and their sorrow to joy. A wave of relief surged over the people; after the years of upheaval -- years in which exhilaration and disillusionment had been so strangely mingled -- they were returning to settled and familiar ways. After war they would have peace; after the experiments of the Commonwealth, they would have the tested constitution of king, lords, and commons; after the intensity of Puritan religion, they would revert to the sober and orderly ministrations of the Church of England. "The old ways," they said, "are better," and they returned to them with relief.

The Restoration era began with innovation at a discount. The cry was for stability, and stability was equated with the order which existed before the war. Most people doubtless believed that they could really return to the ways they had remembered so long and so fondly. Many of these hopes were disappointed, but the clergy were more successful than most of the gentry in making their expectations come true. They could resume possession of the benefices they had lost; they could revive old claims to preferment;¹ they could restore the interrupted usages and customs

1. The Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, for the early months of Charles II's reign is filled with the pleas of clergy for advancement.

of the past. But they themselves had changed. Many of them had ~~suffered~~ suffered severely during the Interregnum, and the mark of their trials was upon them still. The vindictiveness which crept into much of the early Restoration persecution of dissenters was the result of suffering in the past. Those who had gone into exile were also different men when they returned. Cosin and Morley and Sancroft had lived in Catholic countries as representatives of a defeated cause and pensioners of a dependent king. In the anti-Roman works of Bramhall we see with unusual clarity the situation in which the Anglican exiles found themselves. The tendency to discuss Catholicism in an atmosphere aloof and slightly unreal disappeared in the face of Catholicism as actually practised abroad. The point should not be pressed too far; if in Cosin's works there is no record after 1660 of the ritual controversies of earlier years, it may be because his opponents had been overthrown and did not need to be defeated in debate. But at least the steady and settled opposition to Rome -- so decisive a factor in frustrating the plans of Charles II and of his less adroit and less successful brother, James -- was strengthened and confirmed by the experiences of the exiles. The Restoration era proved that the High Churchmen were as zealous Protestants as the Puritans, and in time of need both could sink their differences in order to oppose the Papists.

Many of the returning clergy were not aware that they themselves had changed, and they had no desire for and saw no need of alterations

in the system they upheld. The Savoy Conference and the Act of Uniformity showed that there would be no changes in church order, and it was tacitly assumed that the system of Christian belief was eternal and never changed. Loyal Anglicans would have been deeply shocked if they could have foreseen how many influences would play upon the thought of the Church of England, and how profoundly it would be affected by them. As one by one these forces became apparent and the nature of their effect was seen, they were vehemently denounced by those who believed that Christian thought could not -- or at least should not -- change. The champions of the old order were often less able and usually much less interesting than the advocates of the new, and their importance is consequently overlooked. But changes presuppose a departure from some accepted norm; indeed they are changes only because they deviate from the standard which has hitherto prevailed. The new trends in the religious thought of a period can only be understood in relation to the old ways which they attempt to supercede. A reformer is unintelligible except against the background of the abuses he proposes to remove.

When the Restoration clergy attempted to return to the old and settled ways, it was no simple task for them to define in precise terms their theological ideal. Indeed, the character of that ideal was one of the issues which had been involved in the recent struggles. The victory they had recently won was the final stage in a battle which had raged for many years, and whose origins went even beyond the Elizabethan settlement. In the early days of the Reformation the

theology of the English Church was profoundly affected by continental thought, and the first half of the seventeenth century witnessed a bitter struggle with the Calvinism introduced in Elizabethan days. This struggle had seemingly been lost and now had apparently been won. The issues might seem clear enough; many were concerned with points of order, but important theological questions had been raised as well. Predestination and free grace were battle cries in many a fierce debate, but actually the struggle, though undoubtedly important, was very much confused. Many of the clergy might support Laud's ritual reforms and yet be Calvinists in the theology. Puritans could uphold the execution of the King, and yet be essentially Arminians. It would be easier if we could identify a certain political position with a corresponding theological emphasis. But, though any such attempt inevitably involves an oversimplification, the events of the Interregnum made it much easier to draw such inferences without seriously distorting the truth. With few exceptions the Roundheads were Calvinists, and the Cavaliers increasingly became Arminians. This is a development which, with its antecedents and its consequences, will require detailed study, but it may be noted in passing that when the restored clergy reaffirmed the basic teachings of the Church of England, they were hardly likely to state them in Calvinistic terms.

One of the notable features of the period from 1660 to 1700 is the steady persistence of an Anglicanism of moderate and non-controversial type. At the time of the Restoration its most distinguished representatives were men like Hammond and Walton and Sanderson.

They stood in the tradition of Hooker and Andrewes; by going behind the recent controversies for their inspiration, they were able to go beyond them in their teaching. Though Jeremy Taylor's iridescent genius made him difficult to classify, he belonged essentially to the same school, and there were many others, less distinguished but still influential, who shared this point of view.

The general outlines of their position do not need to be stated in detail, but it is necessary to notice certain points at which it was challenged during the period which the Restoration ushered in.

Its cosmology was pre-scientific; it was apparently sanctioned by the Bible and for centuries had been woven into the substance of both academic and popular theology. The earth was the centre of the universe, and at a relatively recent period had been created in six days. The celestial bodies revolved around the earth, and were expressly intended for the service and delight of man. Heaven was situated above the sky, and hell beneath or within the earth. The orderly functioning of nature was subject to frequent and unpredictable interruptions, and malign agencies were always at work. Devils might not actually appear, but their personal representatives -- witches and sorcerers -- were always near at hand. The old science seemed in a general way the authority for this view of the world, but this kind of cosmology was firmly believed by people who had never heard of Ptolemy or Copernicus. It was part of the ordinary person's conception of life; it was his understanding of the stage on which

he spent his days. Because it was so generally accepted it usually passed unscrutinized. It found its way quite naturally into treatises and sermons; it was as likely to be assumed in learned works of controversy as in the pulpit of the village church. To question it raised issues with which religious discussion had not hitherto been seriously concerned; men were so preoccupied with discussions of "foreknowledge absolute" that they were imperfectly aware of the emergence of a new cosmology. Those who had heard of Copernicus were apt to dismiss his theory as a dangerous attempt to overturn the teachings of the Bible.

This traditional view of the world was often an unexamined pre-supposition -- a part of the furnishing of the mind that men took for granted -- but it had its corresponding scientific formulations. With these theology was vaguely but tacitly allied. Scholasticism, with its picture of the world derived from Aristotle through the Arabs and the schoolmen, controlled the outlook and method of the older science. For all its brilliance and importance, the Baconian outlook displaced the older view with surprising slowness. In the universities, scholasticism, whether in theology or science or philosophy, was still supreme, and at the Restoration seemed likely to enjoy a further span of influence. The study of Descartes had been introduced at Cambridge by John Smith and Henry More, but these men were brilliant innovators, and the average teacher still subscribed to the scholastic outlook. Locke found little at Oxford to suggest that a new era was opening in philosophy. But the relation between university

and church was so intimate that the outlook which dominated the one largely controlled the views which prevailed in the other. The vehemence with which the Anglican authorities reacted to James II's ill-considered effort to force his Catholic nominees upon the colleges shows that contemporaries had no doubt of the decisive influence of this connection.

Both in its outlook and its method scholasticism encouraged a reliance on authority. Your presuppositions usually determined your result, and it was desirable, especially in debate, to support them with the most formidable names available. Christian origins were eagerly studied and uncritically used. The Fathers were quoted at tedious length, and the shapeless conglomeration of extracts which disfigure the pages of most religious works proves they were expected to carry weight with the reader. The Bible, of course, possessed an unapproachable authority, and it only failed to be decisive because it could be quoted in support of such diverse propositions. Biblical criticism had not yet been born; all portions of Scripture were treated alike, and every passage possessed an authority equal to that of any other. The search for texts that would be conclusive in debate encouraged a minute familiarity with the Bible. It developed infinite ingenuity in those engrossed in the intricate battles of text and counter-text, but it still remains a marvel that men could know the Bible so well and understand it so little.

The structure of traditional theology was generally accepted, and there was little tendency to question its essential adequacy and

truth. The pronouncements of the General Councils and the works of the great theologians supported it; in that authoritarian age such commendation was enough. It is quite true that the interpretation of particular doctrines was heatedly debated; but all parties claimed to be the true expositors of a standard accepted by them all. In recent years the doctrine of the Holy Spirit had been set forth in strange and disconcerting ways, but almost all the sectaries claimed to be Christians in the accepted interpretation of the word. The nature of the Atonement might be a matter of dispute, but the traditional view of the Person of Christ was generally accepted. The doctrine of the Trinity was no doubt a mystery, but few were willing to dissent from it on that account.

The accepted norm of religious thought was not often stated, because it was generally taken for granted. It was always in the background; at the end of our period, as at the beginning, it commanded the adherence of most members of the Church of England. And yet throughout the generation following the Restoration, it was under attack at almost all the points we have mentioned. Its cosmology was confronted with the discoveries of Newton as well as with those of Copernicus, and by the opening of the eighteenth century, the new world view was accepted as a matter of course by large numbers of clergy and laity. The new physics found its exponents among scholars like Bentley and essayists like Addison, and educated men, as they surveyed the stars at night, were reassured to know that

"In Reason's ear they all rejoice,

And utter forth a glorious voice;

Forever singing as they shine,

'The Hand that made us is divine.'"

But the theme of this song was really the wonders of the new cosmology.

Meanwhile scholasticism was becoming more and more a synonym for obscurantist ignorance. It had obstructed the progress of science and had distorted the true character of philosophy. Its method was wrong; how then could its results be right? Hand in hand with the challenge to scholasticism went an attack on authority in almost all its forms. But if one court of appeal is discredited, another must be found. Against the dead weight of tradition, whether of the classics or of the Fathers, men set the authority of reason. Different thinkers might use the word in different senses, but all alike appealed to it as the living alternative to a lifeless authority. The Bible alone seemed to hold its unique position. Those who protested against the intricacies of dogma always appealed directly to the sacred text. When Locke wished to prove the essential simplicity of Christianity, he expounded, verse by verse, large portions of the New Testament. This, he manifestly believed, would blast the arguments of his opponents. But there were already premonitions of change. The Bible also was brought, though subtly, to the bar of reason. The principles of literary criticism were emergin, and before long would be demonstrated with consummate brilliance by Bentley in his Dissertation on Phalaris. Though the outward protestations of deference were maintained, the Bible was beginning to lose that inward and constraining authority

which made it so great a power throughout the seventeenth century.

Even the traditional system of Christian belief was called in question. Socinianism challenged the orthodox view of the Person of Christ, and the Restoration period was acutely aware that at this point a serious issue had been raised. The Socinian was often refuted, and still more often abused, but he is the most conspicuous example of the questioning spirit as it was applied to theological belief. The Arian was a near relation of the Socinian, and illustrates the trend toward Unitarianism which had already set in. To some people a theological system that abandoned the doctrine of the Trinity appealed as a simpler and more reasonable form of belief, and simplicity and reason were establishing a virtual tyranny over men's minds. Some felt that it would make it easier to reconcile Christianity to the new discoveries of science. In due course Unitarianism virtually swept English Presbyterianism away, and it made deep inroads into the lay theology of the Church of England. It made it necessary, moreover, for the defenders of orthodoxy to restate their own belief, and the seventeenth century ended with the indecisive intricacies of the great Trinitarian controversy.

The history of religious thought from the Restoration to Queen Anne consists largely of successive attempts to modify the accepted standards of Anglican theology. Very little of this assumed the form of direct attacks on the traditional beliefs. Every innovator claimed that he was merely recalling the church to the simplicities

which had been obscured with time. Only at the very end of the century do we begin to suspect, as with certain of the Deists, that they are consciously changing the meaning of terms while retaining the familiar phrases as a screen against attack.

Since all thought was still closely related to religious thought, the account of changes in theology inevitably includes the names of many of the most brilliant and influential figures of the age. But it must be borne in mind that though Locke and Newton focused on themselves the attention of posterity, there remained the great mass of slightly inert and inarticulate belief that still largely corresponded to the ancient ideal. Nor should the contribution of the conservatives be overlooked. An "anchor out of the stern" may help to forestall disaster, and often those who are slow to change preserve values which neither they nor their more brilliant critics fully comprehend.

The important changes are often impalpable and consequently impossible to describe in detail. The explicit content of belief may change; so may the spirit in which men approach it. The Restoration succeeded an age in which religion had been discussed with an unparalleled intensity, and the new era bore all the marks of a period of reaction. Men were distinctly wary of the enthusiasms which had made the Interregnum so great and yet so difficult a period. There was a deliberate attempt to moderate the intensities of belief. Religious discussion neither rose so high nor sank so low as it had done before. It avoided extravagance because it was unwilling to risk any passionate commitment,

but the price it paid was a gradual decline toward mediocrity. Many of the influential figures were second-rate in their ability, and made no striking contribution because they had no original insight. Tillotson's ponderous folios are a cogent demonstration that where there is no vision the people perish. Men went forward into a sober and colourless age. Debate could still be virulent, but the grander notes had disappeared. Earlier in the century the pamphlet warfare had engaged the ablest minds and called forth some of the most notable writings of the period. Few Puritan pamphleteers could rise to the level of Milton's great prose passages, but many of them at least revealed a moral earnestness which commands respect. After 1660 controversy could still be noisy, but much of it was intolerably trivial, and in retrospect appears as sordid and inconsequential as an ale-house brawl. In its more serious writings, the Restoration period possessed both the strength and the weakness of moderation, but as time went on the failings tended to predominate. Even the appeal to reason lost its dignity and degenerated to the level of a pedestrian common sense. The closing years of the seventeenth century produced a theological literature dispassionate in tone and almost wholly lacking in distinction.

This kind of verdict may seem to damn the period with faint praise. But in spite of its shortcomings, the theology of the age has an attraction and an importance entirely its own. It is true that many of the men were commonplace and most of their writings dull; it is equally true,

and vastly more important, that they contributed to a change whose far-reaching consequences are not exhausted yet. The early years of the seventeenth century may be inspiring, but they are unquestionably remote. The prevailing outlook is unfamiliar and the spirit of the age is alien to our own. By the beginning of the eighteenth century we are already on the threshold of modern times. We recognize instinctively the importance of the issues raised in the religious discussion of the Restoration era. The place of reason, the character of morality, the limits of authority, the nature of the universe, the reign of law -- these are all questions which we still debate. What is more, we discuss them in essentially the same spirit as that which first emerged in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The same canons of directness and simplicity hold good. This does not suggest that thought has not moved rapidly and far since the beginning of the eighteenth century. It merely indicates that Tillotson and Locke and Toland belong to the modern age in a way that Andrewes and Hooker and Laud do not. Eighteenth century writers can be perverse and unimaginative, and the terms in which they think are often remote, but there is gulf between their age and ours such as divides the present day from the times of Charles I or Cromwell. The period of transition is the generation which followed the Restoration, and during those years the new lines of thought were marked out. The rôle of reason in religion claimed the attention of the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians, of John Locke, the Deists, and the representatives of the new science. At a great variety of other points, the theology

of the eighteenth century took shape during the closing years of the preceeding age. No one arose for many years to challenge the prestige of Locke and Newton. These men moulded the outlook of succeeding generations; with their immense authority they reinforced tendencies already at work, and so created -- in theology no less than in philosophy and physics -- a new standard to which the ordinary educated man was anxious to conform. For good and ill, the end of the seventeenth century decided the tone and character of religious thought for many years to come.

CHAPTER TWO. THE ECLIPSE OF CALVINISM.

The second half of the seventeenth century saw many changes in English religious thought, but none more striking than the overthrow of Calvinism. By 1660, Calvinism in England had passed the peak of its power, though at first contemporaries scarcely recognized the fact. Throughout the following generation, the character of the change became increasingly apparent, and after the Revolution all the dominant forces in public life combined to hasten yet further the decline of Calvinism. At the beginning of the century, it had dominated the religious life of England; by the end its power had been completely overthrown. In that process, the Restoration was as decisive as any political fact can be in altering the character of a people's thought. In the seventeenth century, religious developments were so closely related to political affairs that changes in one area inevitably produced important results in the other. The return of Charles II was at once the overthrow of the Puritan party and the defeat of the Puritan theology. The Restoration meant that all the political forces in the nation added their pressure to the various influences which were discrediting Calvinism. To understand the change we must follow its results during the Restoration period, but to grasp its causes we must first glance backward to the beginnings of the struggle against Calvinism. The change is so important and so closely related to national

life in the seventeenth century that it is impossible to consider the new day without relating it to the old.

The conflict with the Puritans was not at the outset an attack on their theology. Those who withstood Cartwright disliked his church polity but not his doctrine. Whitgift was no less a Calvinist than his opponent. The theology of the English Reformation had been strongly influenced by continental Protestantism, and the experiences of the Marian exiles had made them more than ever dependent on the form of doctrine that seemed best able to withstand the attacks of Rome. There was an unquestioned element of strength in Calvinism; it was a fighting creed, and it met the needs of the sixteenth century. The leaders of the Elizabethan Church were Calvinists almost to a man.

The struggle over ritual and church order raised other and more searching questions. Early in the seventeenth century, the champions of Catholic order were beginning to challenge the entire Calvinistic system. As an alternative they advanced Arminianism. In Holland it had established itself in conflict with Calvinism, and in England it provided the theological undergirding for the attack on the order and polity of the Puritans. Its emergence promised to make the breach complete. Under Abbot, the last Calvinist archbishop of Canterbury, the cleavage between the two parties was becoming increasingly clear. In his "Appello Caesarem", Montague had boldly declared that he was "no Calvinist, no Lutheran, but a Christian." He did not always draw the distinction with tact or circumspection, but at least he indicated

the grounds on which he -- and a growing body of able scholars with him -- rejected the doctrines both of Geneva and of Rome. Popular opinion, however, would not admit that the new position was equally opposed to Popery and Calvinism.¹ Antagonism to Arminianism was rising on every side.² But in Laud the Arminians had a resolute and able, though certainly not a conciliatory, leader. In him their views first found an exponent possessed of far-reaching authority and upheld by the highest power in the realm.

Laud was an Arminian, but he was not primarily a theologian.³ He was concerned with church order rather than with Christian belief. He wanted to restore what he considered the primitive and rightful order of the Church of England, and he tacitly assumed that the kind of order he wished to see enforced was derived from principles which no true Anglican could oppose. But because Laud's approach was that of the administrator, it did not follow that his opponents would consent to meet him on his chosen ground. Differences in the sphere of order ran back to differences in the realm of belief; raising the level of the chancel meant exalting the position of the priest. Because Laud attacked the ritual practices of the Calvinists, they retorted by

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1. Cf. the title of a pamphlet published in London in 1626: "A Dangerous Plot Discovered: by a Discourse wherein is proved that Mr. Richard Montague in his two books...laboureth to bring in the faith of Rome and Arminius under the name and pretence of the doctrine and faith of the Church of England."
 2. Cf. the letters of Montague to Cosin, Cosin Correspondence (Surtees Society), Vol.I, pp.79-100.
 3. On occasion, however, Laud could speak emphatically enough against the theology of the opposing party. cf. his summary of the Calvinistic view of predestination in his reply to Lord Saye and Sele: "...which opinion my very soul abominates. For it makes God, the God of all mercy, to be the most fierce and unreasonable tyrant in the world."

attacking his theology.

In the early seventeenth century, a disagreement of this kind quickly spread beyond the bounds of either church order or Christian belief. The Calvinists attacked the powers and prerogatives of the bishops, and this proved to be the prelude to a struggle in a yet wider field. Charles I supported Laud; the king's opponents upheld the Calvinists, and the political significance of the cleavage rapidly became apparent. Arminianism had been caught up in the tide of great national issues. To the supporters of the king, it seemed increasingly apparent that the Calvinists were rebels. "Predestination," wrote Dr. Samuel Brooke to Laud, "is the root of Puritanism, and Puritanism the root of all rebellion and disobedient intractableness and all schism and sauciness in the country, nay in the Church itself." Arminianism, on the other hand, was rapidly becoming a term of loose abuse, and was proving a useful weapon in political warfare. In January, 1629, Sir John Eliot clearly showed that the rising party in the House of Commons was committed to the interpretation of Anglican doctrine contained in the Lambeth Articles. "We do reject," he added, "the sense of the Jesuits and Arminians."¹ Even more emphatic was the resolution passed during the turbulent session of March 2, 1629. "Whoever shall bring in innovation in religion, or by favour seek to extend or introduce Popery or Arminianism, or other opinions disagreeing from the true and orthodox Church, shall be reputed a capital enemy to this Kingdom and Commonwealth."²

1. Foster, Sir John Eliot, Vol.II, p.210, where the speech is given in full.

2. Parliamentary History, Vol.II, p.491.

In a struggle of this kind, the doctrine of the losing side was inevitably involved in the overthrow of its political forces. The situation was complex; many clergy who supported Laud's reforms were Calvinistic in their general theological position, but nevertheless it was Arminianism that was branded as the characteristic view of the Royalist party. As a result of the Civil War, it suffered virtually complete eclipse, and Calvinism was everywhere in the ascendent. The Westminster Assembly of Divines symbolized its triumph and furnished it with authoritative statements of its belief. For twenty years the men most prominent in English religious life -- the writers most widely read and the preachers most eagerly heard -- were Calvinists. John Owen, one of the most influential figures of the period, first attracted public notice by an intransigent exposition of the prevailing views, and in his position and his outlook he was only representative of Stephen Marshall, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye and many, many others.

This does not imply that the Calvinists always agreed among themselves. Within the dominant theological school there were innumerable shades of opinion, and the various sects could fight bitterly enough among themselves, in spite of the Calvinism common to them all. The triumph of their creed was so complete that they could afford the luxury of disagreement. Thus at the very moment when the citadel of Calvinism seemed to be impregnable, fissures began to disfigure its walls. The unanimity was deceptive because it was superficial.

It is as a "Puritan dissenter" that a man like John Goodwin

demands attention. He may not have been a popular leader, and the extent of his influence is hard to gauge, but the significance of the man is beyond dispute. The whole character of his thought stood out in sharp contrast to that of John Owen, and no man of his period held such enlightened views regarding civil government and religion. It is true that he was the only Puritan theologian of the first rank who repudiated Calvinism, but at least he proves that the prevailing views did not go unchallenged. It may be that Goodwin helps us to understand the secret of the weakness of Calvinism in the critical years before and after the Restoration. Calvinism had been indelibly associated with the Puritan party; it was the religious variant of what in the political sphere was the Commonwealth. The identification of Arminianism with Laud's form of Church order and Charles I's version of absolutism had led to its eclipse; Calvinism suffered from a corresponding identification with political forces, and was similarly involved in their overthrow. But when that day came, the apparent unanimity of Calvinism had been already broken. It was no longer the theology of a unified and disciplined party. In the days of its prosperity its adherents had allowed themselves the luxury of quarrelling about many things. Whereas formerly they had drawn together to oppose Laud, they had now drifted apart because of differences regarding baptism, church order, toleration, and the proper forms of civil government. Some, like John Goodwin, had abandoned the theology they formerly held, and challenged its fundamental presuppositions. When the Calvinists stood in greatest need of unity, they had lost it.

The ascendancy of Calvinism ended as abruptly as did the rule of the saints. The change, of course, declared itself more gradually, because transformations in theology are more difficult to date than events like the return of Charles II to his throne. In retrospect, however, it is clear that the Restoration definitely marked the end of an era in English religious thought. It drove from power the exponents of Calvinism, and by the same token it restored to positions of influence men who on the whole were favourable to Arminianism. In this respect, as in most others, Archbishop Juxon was chiefly important as a symbol; he was best remembered as the friend of Laud and the confidant of Charles I. He was not a great scholar or an influential theologian, but events had made him the most conspicuous survivor of those who had been committed to the principles of the school of Laud.

Though the Calvinist ascendancy was over, the true character of Restoration theology did not immediately appear. The struggle against the Puritans had often left men's loyalties curiously intertwined. The Interregnum had vastly increased the homogeneity of the Royalist party, but even after the Restoration there were still men of considerable importance whose thought reflected a condition common thirty years before. Dr. Gunning, who replaced Dr. Tuckney as Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, and who rose to be bishop of Ely, was still, as far as we can judge, a Calvinist. Bishop Morley of Winchester, who in earlier days had coined the

well-known epigram about what the Arminians held,¹ remained in all essentials a Calvinist until he died. Nevertheless a significant change had taken place. These men may have been too old to refashion the framework of their theological system, but their sympathies had completely altered. Though they might still be Calvinists when it came to quoting text-book terms, in outlook they were wholly in agreement with the general aims of the restored Church of England. Their Calvinism was a survival from the past, and bore no real relation to the interests and ideas of the new day. Morley, remarks Burnet, "was a Calvinist with relation to the Arminian points, and was thought a friend of the Puritans before the wars; but he took care after his promotion to free himself from all suspicions of that kind."² In the disputes with the nonconformists, these men were not a whit less vehement than their colleagues on the episcopal bench. Baxter's account of the Savoy Conference makes it quite apparent that Morley and Gunning felt no kinship whatever with the Calvinists who had been men of influence during the Interregnum.

In the early debates, however, the crucial issues concerned church order, and here the differences were so clearly defined that the antagonists were often willing to concede agreement in other areas. Indeed, one of the remarkable features of the controversies

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1. When asked what the Arminians held, Morley replied that they held all the best bishoprics and deaneries in England.
 2. Burnet, History of My Own Time, (edited by Osmund Airy), Vol. I, p. 314.

of the early Restoration period is the explicit assumption that in doctrine both Puritans and Royalists were at one. Baxter affirmed this on behalf of the Presbyterians, and his claim was not disputed. On occasion, the same plea proved useful to the other side, and as late as 1680 Stillingfleet could reinforce his attack on nonconformist schism by asserting that in doctrine churchmen and separatists were not divided.¹ When John Owen answered Stillingfleet, he agreed that as regards belief, "the sober Protestant people of England were of one mind."² But in neither case is the claim convincing. Theological controversy often drives men to use arguments which are effective rather than to search for judgments which are true, and any one who reads the works of Stillingfleet and Owen is more conscious of the difference in tone than of the agreement in principle. When the necessities of debate demanded it, the Restoration Anglicans were quick enough to accuse their opponents of heresy. In his Friendly Debate, Simon Patrick boldly identified Calvinism with Antinomianism, and charged all Puritans with both errors.³ In fact, the day had passed when Conformists and Puritans were agreed on doctrine, and an element of Jesuitry creeps into the claims that there are no essential differences between them. The Anglican writers who are

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1. Edward Stillingfleet, Sermon on The Mischief of Separation (1680).
 2. John Owen, Vindication of the Non-conformists from the Charge of Schism, Works, Vol. XIII, p.305.
 3. Simon Patrick, A Friendly Debate, &c, 3rd ed., p.47 (misnumbered 74); also pp. 12, 145, 153, 238.

most characteristic of the Restoration Church seize every opportunity to attack predestination, yet this question of "decrees" had become the hall-mark of Calvinism. The Arminians had always challenged absolute and unconditioned predestination on the grounds of its ethical incompleteness; the divine will, they said, is absolutely supreme, but its supremacy is moral. God is as free to forgive as he is to punish. This is only one of the five principal subjects around which the struggle of Arminian and Calvinist raged,¹ but in England none of the others arrested to any comparable degree the attention of the average theological writer. Predestination had caught the popular imagination, and there is no shadow of doubt that those who spoke for the Restoration Church of England opposed it.

On this point, then, they were perfectly conscious of their differences, but it was only gradually that men recognized in what profound and far-reaching ways the Restoration had changed the character of English religious thought. This was due in part to the fact that Arminianism had become primarily a political question, and hence its full theological significance was never recognized as clearly in England as in Holland. Moreover, in the first instance, the reaction had been more against the temper in which Calvinism had been maintained than against the views which it advanced. Popular feeling had been more exasperated by the political and ecclesiastical forms which Calvinism had assumed

1. The others were the Atonement, Depravity, Conversion, and Final Perseverance.

than against the doctrines it asserted. That was why "a High Church Calvinist"¹ like Morley could accept the change in government and church order without realizing its full doctrinal significance.

But during the reign of Charles I the Calvinists had been quick to see that the two areas could not be divorced, and, though under Charles II neither side was so prompt to admit the fact, its truth became increasingly clear. For one thing, the men who exercised the greatest influence in theology were committed to Arminianism in one form or another, and were emphatic in denouncing Puritan politics, theology and church order. Cosin had fought against the Calvinists in the days before the Civil War, and he still believed that their creed was a menace in all its manifestations.² He could be surprisingly generous to individual Puritans, and was anxious to persuade certain of them to conform³, but this did not lessen his opposition to their theology. Thorndike was equally hostile to Calvinism, and though Hammond barely survived the Restoration, his influence lived on, and was strongly anti-Puritan in tendency. As bishop of Chester, Brian Walton enjoyed his new dignity only a few months, but he represented the chief opposition to the narrow scriptural literalism of most of the Puritans, and his more liberal view of the Bible prevailed.

1. Dr. Hook, quoted in J. Hunt, Religious Thought in England, Vol.I, p.327n.

2. John Cosin, Correspondence (Surtees Society), Vol. II, pp.xxv-xxvi, 97, 106, 197-205, 238, 254, &c.

3. cf. E. Calamy, The Nonconformist's Memorial (abridged, corrected, &c, by Samuel Palmer), 2nd edition (1802), Vol.II, p.178.

Sheldon was perhaps more representative of the Restoration period than any of these men. He was an ecclesiastic, not a theologian, but he attacked every manifestation of Calvinism, whether in church or state, in doctrine or polity.

The change which was taking place in English thought can best be studied in the works of a single writer. Robert Sanderson was an influential figure both before the Civil War and after the Restoration. The parliamentary authorities ejected him in 1648 from the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford; Charles II elevated him in 1661 to the see of Lincoln.

Sanderson himself gives us a number of illuminating glimpses into the history of his thought. He began, where many of his contemporaries began, as a Calvinist. As a student, he read the Institutes, "for that book," he tells us, "was commended to me, as it was generally to all young scholars in those times, as the best and perfectest system of divinity, and fittest to be laid as a ground work in the study of that profession."¹ As time went on, he modified his judgment of the work, but even in later years he conceded the immense vitality and power of the book. So great was the prestige of the Institutes that even the errors of Calvin were vested with authority. Sanderson, however, had also been introduced to Hooker; he read the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity "to his great profit", and found in them the necessary corrective to the rigours of Calvinism. He was still willing to accept Sublapsarianism

1. Sanderson, Letter to Hammond, published in 1660. Works (Oxford, 1854), Vol.V, p.297.

on Calvin's authority, but Supralapsarianism he always rejected.¹ This proved an untenable compromise; the pressure of the Quinparticular controversy drove him to abandon Sublapsarianism,² and Sanderson was already moving steadily away from the Calvinism of his early years. In the process he modified, even if he never wholly abandoned, his antipathy to Arminianism. When he first printed his sermons, he had, by means of a foot-note, accused the Arminians of holding false doctrine; when he reissued the same sermons on the eve of the Restoration, the charge was silently withdrawn.³

Sanderson had already moved to an intermediary position which is difficult to define. He clearly saw the weaknesses of both parties to the theological debates which raged around him. He admitted more and more frankly "the harshness of that opinion which Calvin and Beza are said to have held, and many learned men in our Church have followed, concerning the Decrees of Election and Reprobation."⁴ He was not prepared to admit that "the inconveniences which either do ensure or seem to ensure upon that opinion" can only be avoided by becoming an Arminian.⁵ He believed that this kind of logic, with its attempt to enforce an exclusive alternative, was responsible for the divisive spirit so prominent in the church; the simplicities of either-or were merely destructive of unity.⁶ Sanderson could recognise the

1. Sanderson, Works, Vol. VI, p.352f.

2. Ibid, Vol. VI, p.315.

3. cf. Wlaton's Life of Sanderson, Works, Vol. VI, p.316.

4. Sanderson, Works, Vol. V, p.262-3.

5. Ibid, Vol. V, p.263.

essential greatness of Luther and Calvin; these men were worthy instruments of God, but they were not the lords of our belief.¹ Nothing could justify the bitterly partisan spirit which the Calvinists displayed whenever they were drawn into controversy. "Do not they (the Puritans) usually in their sermons fall bitterly upon the Papists and Arminians, but seldom meddle with the Socinians? scarce ever mention the Turks?"²

To a candid mind, however, the Arminians were no better. Their system was plausible, and appealed strongly to the unregenerate instincts of the natural man. It had a dangerous "congruity...in sundry points with the principles of corrupt Nature, and of carnal reason. For it is a wonderful tickling to flesh and blood to have the powers of nature magnified, and to hear itself flattered as if she carried the greatest stroke in the work of salvation, especially when these soothing are conveyed under the pretence of vindicating the dispensations of God's providence from the imputation of injustice."³ Even more disconcerting to him was "the manifold cunning of the Arminians to advance their party."⁴ With discernment yet with great cogency he exposed the practices to which controversy drove

1. Sanderson, Works, Vol. III, p.289: "And is it not also blameworthy in us, and a fruit of the same carnality, if any of us should affect to be accounted rigid Lutherans or perfect Calvinists. Worthy instruments they were...of God's glory, but yet...men."

2. Ibid, Vol. II, p.xxv.

3. Ibid, Vol. V, p.262.

4. Ibid, Vol. V, p.263-4.

them. He noted with dismay the threat of schism which lurked in Arminian methods. Since Montague had raised the issue, there were many circumstances which had fostered the growth of Arminianism, but none of a kind to compensate for the dangers it raised.

Both sides alike, however, were at fault in confusing the issue by resorting to indiscriminate abuse. How could clear thinking survive when beclouded with recrimination? With the Puritans, it was a favourite device to dispose of an opponent's arguments by blackening him with the name of Arminian. The other party was just as bad. Sanderson gives examples of people who were accused of Puritanism even when the questions under debate gave no excuse for raising the cry of Calvinism. To show the absurdity of this proceeding, he appeals, significantly enough, to Hooker. Those who agree with Hooker in matters of doctrine are classed as Puritans, but what would Hooker think of so glaring an anomaly?¹

While thus drawn between contending parties, Sanderson gradually evolved an intermediate and thoroughly characteristic position. By 1660 its essential outlines were clearly visible, and it found expression in all Sanderson's works published after that date.² Moreover, it became representative of a non-controversial type of Anglicanism which was widely held after the Restoration. It is

1. Sanderson, Works, Vol. V, p.265.

2. Though most of Sanderson's later works appeared in the years directly after the Restoration, some were not published till as late as 1678.

neither Calvinist nor Arminian, and it contributed to the creation of a point of view which stemmed directly from neither the one nor the other. Its essential characteristic was a humility willing both to change its views and to acknowledge that it had done so. "And let me here tell the reader also," remarks Isaac Walton, "that if the rest of mankind would, as Dr. Sanderson, not conceal their alteration of judgment, but confess it to the honour of God and themselves, our nation would become freer from pertinacious disputes, and fuller of recantations."¹ It is the part, moreover, both of humility and of wisdom to recognize the proper limits of debate. The bounds within which it can profitably be conducted are strictly fixed; once they have been passed, prudent men will desist from arguing. There is a note of wondering sorrow in the exclamation of Sanderson which Dr. Pierce has quoted -- "And yet to see the restless curiosity of men!"² As Hammond remarked in the last letter he wrote to Sanderson, "God can reconcile his own contradictions," and Sanderson would have agreed with the general advice that all men should "study mortification, and be wise to sobriety."³ All the weary wrangling of recent times was due, said Sanderson, to the refusal to accept the proper limits of discussion. When men are not content that mysteries should remain so, the world is "filled with endless

1. I. Walton, Life of Robert Sanderson, from Sanderson, Works, Vol. VI, p.317.

2. Sanderson, Works, Vol. VI, p.353.

3. Ibid, Vol. VI, p.317.

disputes, and inextricable difficulties. And all the heat on both sides in the Arminian controversies, which hath begotten such intricate and perplexed difficulties, as neither side can clearly acquit itself from the inconveniences wherewith it is charged by the adverse party, had its rise from the curiosity of men, who, not content to believe those clear truths which are consented to on either side....must needs be searching into the manner, how the Grace of God and man's will do co-operate, and how far forth, and in what order."¹

With the diffidence that sees and accepts the limits of argument went a greater sensitiveness to the temper proper to theological debate. The arrogance of some controversialists, said Sanderson, led straight to their undoing. In their self-assurance they ventured to bring any mystery "within the comprehension of reason," and found themselves "enwrapped unawares in perplexed and inextricable difficulties." In attempting to extricate themselves they had rashly pressed forward instead of drawing back, and found themselves "driven to devise and maintain strange opinions, of very perilous and noisome consequence, which hath been the original of most heresies and schisms in the Church."²

It is consequently prudent as well as necessary to recognize and allow for legitimate differences. Experience had shown Sanderson that they would be neither few nor unimportant. Lutherans and Calvinists

1. Sanderson, Works, Vol. VI, p.388 (Letter to Thomas Barlow, at Queen's Coll., Oxon., 17th Sept., 1657).

2. Ibid, Vol. V, p.256 (Pax Ecclesiae, 1678).

disagreed, and even within the Roman Church there were varying schools of thought. Each of these, again, was subdivided, sometimes on issues of great consequence -- "predestination and reprobation, the power of man's free will, the necessity, efficacy and extent of free grace, &c." Yet having honestly faced this wide divergence of opinion, Sanderson was satisfied "that there may yet be preserved in the Church the unity both of faith and charity."¹

A confidence of this kind is only saved from self-delusion if it observes certain necessary conditions. The first requirement is that men should rest content with definitions which might fall short of logical completeness. When terms are too strictly defined or pressed too remorselessly to their conclusion, the inevitable result is division. Men can only agree to differ so long as a certain liberty of individual interpretation is allowed, and this becomes impossible unless latitude is permitted. Consequently it is the part of wisdom and of charity to insist only on the simplest and most comprehensive standards of belief. The kind of controversy which had destroyed the unity of English religious life was not necessary. There was no need to demand a uniform interpretation of debated articles. Both Calvinists and Arminians could follow their own consciences, and the kind of issue on which they had disagreed need not divide the church. It was right, Sanderson thought, to insist on the Articles and the

1. Sanderson, Works, Vol. V, p.257.

Book of Common Prayer; beyond that it was expedient to allow liberty.

The position which Sanderson reached and which he commended to others admittedly lacks clear and explicit definition. It solves many of the debated issues by evading them, and asks for charity instead of giving reasons. After the fierceness of religious argument, a characteristically Anglican position was emerging. It may appear more a plea for comprehension than a contribution to current discussions, but it goes back to characteristically English sources of authority, and substitutes Hooker for Calvin or Arminius. It is willing to allow a certain flexibility and a measure of indeterminateness in definition. It deprecates the intolerance of debate, and in sober accents pleads for a reasonable attitude to religious questions.

It is hard to estimate the contemporary influence of a man like Sanderson; he may have helped to mould the thought of the new day, or he may simply have reflected its character. At all events he is a figure of unusual interest. He had been a Calvinist but had rejected the rigidities which marked Calvinism in the days of its full-blown development. The position he ultimately reached is scarcely defined in theological terms at all. He had less confidence in reason than the typical Restoration writers; otherwise they could often have used both his arguments and his phrases to serve their purposes.

In an important respect Sanderson was representative of the new day. The debates which had developed such fierce loyalties were over, but men were not immediately concerned to define a precise alternative position. In a sense the fight between the Calvinists and the Arminians was a dead issue. Here Sanderson helps us to recognize the true character of the new day. He had reached an intermediary position which was neither Calvinist nor Arminian. But the very fact that it was a mediating position brought it in effect into line with Arminianism. The characteristic feature of Arminianism is its conditionalism, and "moderation is the mark of its method."¹ It is in this sense that the theology of the Restoration can be described as Arminian. The way in which Arminianism had become a political issue had tended to dilute its theological distinctiveness, and as the Restoration period progressed the results were increasingly apparent. There was no longer any deep concern with the doctrine of grace; men emphasized the beneficial example which Christ had left us, not the atoning work he had wrought on our behalf. Arminianism survived chiefly as a negation of what Calvinism had stood for, but since their opponents were now so weak and scattered, there was less need for the Arminians to develop their own characteristic insights. Even their relations with Arminians abroad did nothing to bring them back to the distinctive affirmations with which Arminianism began. Burnet and Tillotson corresponded with Limborsch, and Locke and

1. F. Platt, article on Arminianism, in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.

Newton with LeClerc, but Dutch Arminianism was subsiding into Socinianism even while English Arminianism was drifting toward Deism. It was consequently a shrunken and attenuated form of Arminianism that persisted throughout the Restoration period. The delicate equilibrium between Calvinism and Pelagianism was sacrificed, and English Arminianism lost its distinctive note as it merged imperceptibly with Latitudinarianism and Rationalism.

Steadily the decline of Calvinism continued. When, early in the eighteenth century, an enthusiast¹ attempted a revival, it had, as an effective force in English life, virtually disappeared. Seldom has a reversal of fortune been so complete. Within fifty years Calvinism in England fell from a position of immense authority to obscurity and insignificance. The causes of so striking a collapse are closely related to the development of English life and thought in the last half of the seventeenth century, and they require brief consideration before this chapter ends.

Calvinism had a magnificent opportunity, and for a brief period wielded wider powers than its popular support would probably have warranted. It prepared its own undoing; it failed to use its great advantages to win the sympathies of ordinary Englishmen. With a reckless lack of moderation, the extremer sects multiplied extravagances until reasonable men were utterly antagonised. The undisciplined exuberance of certain Calvinists discredited the whole system of

1. Dr. John Edwards. cf. his Preacher, (first volume, 1705; second volume, 1706; third volume, 1709).

of thought, and brought about its undoing. Writ large upon the Restoration period is the record of the dread and horror of "enthusiasm". Joseph Glanvill tells us that his first work was an attack upon fanaticism (a "Corrective of Enthusiasm" he calls it), but adds that "his Majesty's much-desired and seasonable arrival" made it less necessary than it had been when he wrote it.¹ It was a general assumption that any man of open mind would see the errors of Calvinism and forsake them. Tillotson was brought up a Puritan, "yet even before his mind was opened to clearer thought, he felt somewhat within him that disposed him to larger notions and a better temper."² In other words, the excesses of Calvinism had made it synonymous with obscurantism. This was true in many areas; the political programme of the wilder sects awakened fear, and even the current religious vocabulary aroused contempt. Robert South who never missed a chance of ridiculing his opponents, described the Puritan preachers as charging "all their crude incoherences, saucy familiarities with God, and nauseous tautologies, upon the Spirit prompting such things to them, and that as the most elevated and seraphic heights of religion."³

Even moderate Calvinism was swept away in the reaction against

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1. J. Glanvill, The Vanity of Dogmatizing, (1660). Epistle Dedicatory.
 2. (Burnet) A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of...John...Lord Archbishop of Canterbury...by Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Srum (1694), p.10.
 3. Robert South, Sermons, 4th ed. (1727), Vol. IV, p.48.

everything that the Interregnum stood for. It had been, after all, the official theology of the Commonwealth. It might not have been responsible for the excesses of Ranters and Fifth Monarchy men, but its adherents had supported the execution of Charles I, and the Royalists found it impossible to conceive a more abominable atrocity than that.¹ It had framed the documents that had been used as tests, and had been the substance of what the great Puritans had been concerned to say. Calvinism had blessed and sanctioned the whole cause which the Restoration had irrevocably overthrown. The reaction which set in swept away the personalities and parties of the Interregnum, and with them vanished the prestige of their chosen theology. Over against this is the fact which we have already noted, that the opponents of Calvinism came back with the halo of recent martyrdom and the authority of present success.

Even the king threw his weight against the Calvinists. He did not perhaps deliberately oppose their theology, and he showed himself genuinely concerned -- whatever may have been his motives -- to secure them some measure of toleration. His whole outlook, of course, was far removed from theirs, and his past experience of Presbyterians had not been happy. But it was for other reasons that his influence tended to undermine the prestige of Calvinism. He was strenuously opposed to religious debate. Theological

1. For the strength of the cult of Charles, King and Martyr, even at the beginning of the eighteenth century, see Lecky, England in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. I, pp.70-3.

controversy would sow the seeds of restiveness and insubordination in the nation's life.¹ Struggles among theologians would end as fights between factions, and Charles II did not intend to see the peace disturbed. But a moratorium on theological debate was not favourable to Calvinism, which flourished best in the bracing atmosphere of eager discussion. Moreover, the official regulations of the Restoration ruled that many of the subjects dearest to the Calvinist could no longer be discussed in public. The Act of Uniformity was reinforced by the king's letters to the archbishops, containing directions concerning preachers. "None are in their sermons to bound the authority of sovereigns, or determine the differences between them and the people; nor to argue the deep points of election, reprobation, free will, &c."² The injunctions may have been designed to promote peace by curbing debate, but they did so by condemning the one side to silence on precisely the points it was most anxious to expound. The first clauses forbade the Puritans to justify their political creed; the last prohibited them from preaching on the subjects most characteristic of the Calvinists' theology.

Neither political failure nor official discouragement could have seriously weakened Calvinism if other forces had not been working to discredit it in subtler and more insidious ways. The character of national thought was changing in ways that

1. Burnet, History of My Own Times, Vol. I, p.329.

2. Oct. 14, 1662. Cal.St.P.Dom., Charles II, 1661-2, p.517.

made the stern affirmations of Calvinism unpalatable. The old antithesis of Calvinist and Arminian was too simple to describe the situation which had arisen. New movements of thought were profoundly influencing theology. There was a new trust in reason and a new willingness to follow its lead. When John Hales, having seen the triumph of Calvinism at Dort, returned disillusioned and "bade good-night to Calvin", he did so in the interests of a reason free to seek the truth. Relatively few of his contemporaries were ready to agree with him, but after 1660 he would have found a much larger following than he did before 1642.

A new spirit was at work, and showed itself in many ways. That little band of brilliant teachers, the Cambridge Platonists, were ceaselessly affirming the dignity of reason, and all the weight of their influence was used to discredit dogmatism. Both explicitly and by implication they attacked everything that Calvinism represented. Closely associated with the new Platonism but developing along different lines was Latitudinarianism. This became unquestionably the dominant theological school of the new era. Among its members it numbered the most famous divines of the age, and more than any other it prepared the way for the characteristic outlooks and attitudes of the eighteenth century. At almost every point its assumptions stood in sharp contrast to those of Calvinism. Tillotson, who became almost a symbol of the later Restoration period, was emphatic in repudiating all the most

characteristic dogmas of Calvinism. "I am as certain," he wrote, "that this doctrine (eternal decrees) cannot be of God as I am that God is good and just, because this grates upon the notion that mankind have of goodness and justice. This is that which no good man would do, and therefore it cannot be believed of infinite goodness. If an Apostle, or an angel from heaven teach any doctrine which plainly overthrows the goodness and justice of God, let him be accursed. For every man hath greater assurance that God is good and just than he can have of any subtle speculations about predestination and the decrees of God." The cool sanity of Tillotson and the pedestrian common-sense of his sermons were fatal to many of the high-flown enthusiasms of the early seventeenth century. To none of them were they so damaging as to Calvinism.

The whole temper of the times was hostile to the old forms of dogmatic certainty. People were tired of extremes of every kind. They had grown weary of the fierce intolerance with which their fathers had fought about many things. In philosophy the spirit of the time found peculiarly exact expression in the writings of John Locke. His work was at once an epitome of the latter part of the seventeenth century, and a forecast of the character of the eighteenth. Locke himself had grown up in a Calvinistic atmosphere, but "early in life he conceived theology in a latitudinarian sense, and later on, under the influence of the Arminians and the Socinians, he developed these ideas in his own

peculiar, very able and original way, which was, however, entirely non-Calvinistic."¹ His conception of freedom of thought embraced "freedom for philosophy and theological interests and security for freedom of thought outside the churches."² Though Locke's authority in the future was to prove to be virtually unparalleled, many of his contemporaries -- some of them men of great eminence in their own fields -- exerted an influence even more definitely hostile to the attitudes and assumptions of Calvinism.

Indeed, the whole tone of intellectual life in England was changing. Interest in religion was steadily declining. The repeated complaints about atheism and the concern about indifference to religion are the recognition among churchmen that the nation's thought was in danger of losing all effective contact with religion. In sermons and treatises the note of anxiety grows steadily clearer;³ even in the midst of the pamphlet controversy, antagonists could pause for a moment in their inter-necine warfare to notice the growing power of an adversary common to them both. In the new day even the adherents of Calvinism found their confidence shaken.⁴ In its pristine strength, Calvinism would have been a force to

1. E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Vol. II, p.637.

2. Ibid.

3. cf. Glanvill, Seasonable Reflections and Discourses, in order to the Conviction and Cure of the Scoffing and Infidelity of a Degenerate Age (1676), passim; there are many examples of the same note in preachers as different as Tillotson and South.

4. Memorials of the Life of Ambrose Barnes, pp.85-7.

reckon with, but it had wasted its resources in futile controversies, and men now dismissed it as a crabbed affirmation of such sterile mysteries as predestination. It had become an abstract scriptural dogmatism. In its statements "the negative polemical side of almost every truth is set forth in clearer and sharper definition than its positive substance. Dogmas are rigorously carried out to their consequences; and the intellect and conscience alike are assailed by the coercive authority with which these consequences in their most theoretical relations are expressed and enforced."¹ From such a system reaction was inevitable; at the end of the seventeenth century the reaction was bound to be decisive. Even in its former strongholds, the grim and militant faith from Geneva steadily lost its hold.

1. J. Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century, Vol. I, p.66.

CHAPTER THREE. THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS.

Until the later years of the seventeenth century, the intensity of party feeling encouraged neither impartiality of mind nor detachment of spirit. One of the problems of the age was to find a method of affirming the truth as each man saw it which would not disrupt both individual serenity and public peace. The eighteenth century met the difficulty by repudiating enthusiasm, but this evaded the problem, it did not solve it. There was, however, a genuine alternative to factious wrangling and a studied moderation. A brilliant group of thinkers, known collectively as the Cambridge Platonists, proved that zeal and charity could dwell together; they showed that religious conviction was not the necessary counterpart of a closed mind. They offered a solution which at that time not many were ready to apply. It may be that it presupposed a strain of genius which few religious thinkers possess, and which the succeeding generation conspicuously lacked. But if the Cambridge Platonists had found a larger following, the theological developments of the next century might have been less sterile than they were.

This does not imply that the Cambridge Platonists failed to influence subsequent religious thought. They profoundly affected men eminent as theologians and ecclesiastics, but it was not their distinctive quality which they transmitted to others. They

conceived of reason as a divine light and of morality as the fruit of a divine life; by the beginning of the eighteenth century the one had become another name for common sense, and the other had been equated with utility.¹ The subsequent history of English thought merely emphasizes the distinctive but slightly isolated position of the Cambridge Platonists.

Even in their own day they defied classification by most of the accepted standards. They lived a cloistered life in the midst of a turbulent age, but they thought in terms of its problems and were not divorced from the main stream of its life.² They belonged neither to the world of the Commonwealth nor to the new society which replaced it. They grew up in the home of English Calvinism; they became its most discerning critics, and yet they carried into the Restoration period something of the best of the tradition in which they had originally been trained.

For our purposes, however, they belong to the Restoration era. most of them were at the height of their powers when Charles II came to the throne. Though Whichcote lost the provostship of King's, he was an influential London minister for over twenty years. Cudworth remained undisturbed in the mastership of Christ's, and More continued uninterrupted his placid ways. Their teaching was

1. cf. F. J. Powicke, The Cambridge Platonists, p.213.

2. Cudworth preached his most notable sermon before the Long Parliament, and Cromwell looked to him for advice. Whichcote, also, was a man whose judgment the leaders of the Commonwealth sought and valued.

bearing fruit in the university,¹ and the men on whom they had set their mark were rising to positions of importance both in Cambridge and beyond it. During the new period their ideas attained their widest currency, Whichcote's sermons at St. Lawrence Jewry attracted discerning and influential congregations, and many of the most important works of the Cambridge Platonists were published after 1660.

Moreover, the Cambridge Platonists, by contributing to the decline of Calvinism, helped to give the Restoration era one of its most characteristic qualities. The whole trend of their teaching was directed in subtle ways against the foundations of the prevailing theology. It was an attack on Calvinism from within; it was all the more significant because made in Cambridge and by men for the most part educated at Emmanuel. Though it was far removed both in tone and character from the usual forms of theological debate, the Calvinists were quick to grasp its implications. The illuminating series of letters which Dr. Tuckney of St. John's wrote to Whichcote is chiefly important as reflecting the uneasiness of earnest Puritans. This was a new form of criticism -- criticism which ignored the polity of Calvinism, but shook the whole system by questioning its basic conceptions. In effect the Cambridge Platonists turned from the familiar theological picture altogether. The old and oft-repeated version of the sacrifice for sin had no

1. John Tillotson, Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Dr. Benjamin Whichcote, p.7.

place in their teaching, and they conceived of salvation in a form and spirit entirely different from the vivid pictorial imagery of the Calvinists.¹ Bunyan was perfectly right in objecting that Edward Fowler's "Design of Christianity" had completely altered the familiar conception of justification by faith,² but it did not necessarily follow (as he thought it did) that the foundations of Christianity were thereby removed. The prevailing theology had become dogmatic and theoretical to an intolerable degree, and the Cambridge Platonists attacked it chiefly by indicating that a broader and simpler system was necessary. Whichcote declared that one text of the Bible³ was a summary of all necessary divinity, and he added that a saved state was a morally sound state. The Puritans had not only emphasized the importance of doctrine, but had dwelt with particular fondness on the mysteries of belief. The Cambridge Platonists never fell into the facile rationalism which repudiates mysteries simply because they are mysteries, but they deprecated too great a pre-occupation with obscure and unintelligible doctrines.⁴ But there

1. B. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p. 136-7.

2. John Bunyan, Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, (1672).

3. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." Titus II, 11-12.

4. "We cannot put a greater abuse upon God than to say he is obscure." Whichcote, Aphorisms, 37.

was one of the dogmas of Calvinism which they directly and unequivocally attacked. Predestination, they claimed, was neither intellectually nor morally defensible. More bluntly called it "the black doctrine of absolute reprobation", and Whichcote declared that "it is not worth the name of religion to charge our consciences with that, which we have not reconciled to the reason and judgment of our minds, to the frame and temper of our souls."¹ It is not surprising that a rigid Calvinist like Thomas Goodwin regarded the Cambridge Platonists with horror.²

At certain points the Puritans might be clearly wrong, but it was the spirit of their theology rather than its content that the Cambridge Platonists chiefly attacked. A narrow, abstract and dogmatic approach to religion seemed certain to pervert its character and lead ultimately to its downfall. The weakness of current theology was clearly demonstrated by the kind of discussion it inspired. The fierce faction fights which disfigured the life of contemporary English Christianity not only condemned the spirit which prompted them, but threatened the survival of all the values which they ostensibly defended. Something was manifestly and seriously at fault. "The more false any one is in his religion, the more fierce and furious in maintaining it; the more mistaken, the more imposing."³ In this atmosphere of ignoble wrangling

1. Whichcote, Aphorisms, 315; note also Smith's emphatic protest in The Nature of Legal and Evangelical Righteousness. Cf. Patrick's tribute to Smith, Autobiography, p.18.

2. Extracts from the Papers of Thomas Woodcock (Camden Miscellany, XI), p.66.

3. Whichcote, op. cit., 499.

true religion could not survive; the life of the spirit was perishing "in the spent air of polemic."¹ It was necessary to find some conciliatory statement of the true principles of Christian theology. In no other way could the desolating and interminable disputes of that period be checked.

The Calvinists had been the chief offenders, but their greater guilt was partly due to their greater opportunity. The spirit of both Puritans and Laudians had been bitter and combative, and the Cambridge Platonists tried to find a middle course between the two.² Against the party committed to the ideals of Laud, they held that conduct and morality are more important than church polity; against the Puritans who were dominated by the rigidity of Calvinist theology, they urged that reason must not be fettered; against both they maintained that the legitimate seat of authority in religion is the individual conscience, governed by reason and illuminated by a revelation which could not be inconsistent with reason itself.³ They hoped to reconcile all save the utterly intransigent by means of a two-fold approach to religion. On the one hand they emphasised the importance of the moral element in Christianity, on the other they explored "in a way not hitherto attempted the foundations of religious belief."⁴ They summoned

1. Willey, op.cit., p.133. Cf. Whichcote: "There is nothing more unnatural to religion than contentions about it." Aphorisms, 756.

2. Cf. S.P. (presumably Simon Patrick) on the "virtuous mediocrity" of the Church of England ideal upheld by the Cambridge Platonists. He contrasts it with the "meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttishness of fanatic conventicles." A New Account, &c, p.7.

3. Campagnac, The Cambridge Platonists, p.xiii.

the divided parties of their day to unite on the common ground of the great essentials of religion. On minor points, the contestants could agree to differ, with the assurance that "the maintenance of truth is rather God's charge, and the continuance of charity ours."¹ The essentials of belief are contained in the Scriptures, and are so clearly set forth that any one using his reason can scarcely miss them.

The appeal to reason is the most conspicuous characteristic of the Cambridge school. In the exercise of reason they saw the distinctive quality of man;² in its repudiation they recognized the mark of all rebellion against God. "To go against reason is to go against God; it is the self-same thing, to do that which the reason of the case doth require and that which God Himself doth appoint; reason is the divine governor of man's life; it is the very voice of God."³ Even the structure of the universe compels us to pay attention to what reason says. In the external framework of the created world God has planted an order and method -- the "Reason in things" -- which the "deiform seed" within us can apprehend. "The judgment of right is the reason of our minds perceiving the Reason of things."⁴

1. Whichcote, Letters to Tuckney, p.118.

2. Cf. Whichcote: "There is nothing proper and peculiar to man, but the use of Reason, and exercise of virtue." Aphorisms, 71.

3. Ibid, 76. Cf. also More's description of reason as the sacerdotal breastplate. To take away reason is "to rob Christianity of that special prerogative which it has above all other religions in the world, namely that it dares to appeal unto reason."

4. Whichcote, Aphorisms,

A term so constantly invoked needs to be carefully defined. Reason has a two-fold meaning for the Cambridge Platonists. On the one hand it meant the discipline of thinking exactly and philosophically about the things which were Real. On the other hand it involved the unification of the whole personality in the pursuit of truth. Each of these requires separate consideration.

From the first emphasis it followed that the Cambridge Platonists were committed to an examination of the structure of belief different from anything which had recently prevailed. Religion and philosophy, so far from being divorced, were brought into the closest and most intimate relation. This was their alternative to the prevailing protestant scholasticism, and it ran counter to the one conclusion on which the leading representatives of English thought were then agreed. "Bacon and Hobbes, Puritans and Prelatists"¹ united in treating philosophy and religion as wholly different in kind. But the Cambridge Platonists insisted that it was precisely this separation which was vitiating the theology of the day. A new approach was necessary, and additional material needed to be used. So they turned naturally even to the pagan philosophers for light on the essential problems of the Christian faith. Because religion is reasonable, the "best thoughts of the best men of all ages and faiths" cannot

1. B. F. Westcott, Religious Thought in the West, p.367.

help but illuminate it. The cumbersome mass of classical learning which burdens the pages of Cudworth and More is not a result of the affectations of the academic mind; it represents an honest attempt to make available the evidence of Greek and Roman philosophy. The contemporary need, as Cudworth saw, was "a philosophy of religion confirmed and established by philosophical reasons in an age so philosophical."¹

It likewise followed from their definition that the Cambridge Platonists exalted a reason which wholly transcended the usual limits of rationalism. It is true that they claimed for religion the entire intellectual life,² but their appeal was to "the inner experience of the whole man acting in harmony, not to mere logic chopping which may leave conduct and even conviction unaffected."³ Reason can only be given this expansive character because of the distinctive relationship in which man stands to God. The inner light which shines in the heart of man is sent of God, but it is actually the same as reason purified and disciplined.⁴ The real presence of God in the soul can sublimate reason into what More calls a "divine sagacity."⁵

In the writings of the Cambridge Platonists there emerges clearly a problem which concerned all progressive thinkers of the

1. Cudworth, True Intellectual System of the Universe, Preface.
2. Inge, Christian Mysticism, p.287.
3. Inge, The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought, p. 52.
4. cf. John Smith, True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge, (Campagnac's edition), p.92-3.
5. H. More, Philosophical Writings, Preface General.

Restoration era. If reason is given its proper place, will it not conflict with faith? What happens when there is an apparent discrepancy? But, said the Cambridge Platonists, no conflict can arise, except through ignorance or misunderstanding; religion is committed to the honouring of reason, and reason enlightens the material of faith. There is a self-illuminating power in divine truth which satisfies the human mind. "Do I dishonour my faith," asks Whichcote, "or do any wrong to it to tell the world that my reason and understanding are satisfied? I have no reason against it; yea, the highest and purest reason is for it."¹ With a single voice the Cambridge Platonists declare the unity of faith and reason. Not so much as a hint escapes John Smith that the place of reason in religion should be circumscribed. Faith anticipates and completes the findings of reason, and philosophy is the handmaid of religion.² It is reason, said Cudworth, that confirms the assurance of faith.³

If reason plays so large a part in religion, is there any place for revelation? It is at least quite clear that there can be no revelation which contradicts the evidence of our minds. A good man, remarked More, cannot believe that anything which conflicts

1. Whichcote, Letters to Tuckney, p.48.

2. Smith, Select Discourses, p.442.

3. Cudworth, True Intellectual System of the Universe, Vol. II, p.517f.

with "natural truth" can have its origin in God.¹ But there is still need of revelation. Reason in man is "a light flowing from the fountain and father of lights", but since man's fall, "the inward virtue and vigour of reason is much abated," and as a supplement to "the truth of natural inscription God hath provided the truth of divine revelation."² Truth, though of one nature, may be offered to man in various forms, but it is always reason that apprehends it. The truths of morality, of physical science, of natural religion, or of the will of God as disclosed in Scripture -- all are ultimately grasped by reason. There is no conflict between faith and reason or between revealed and natural truth. "Our reason is not confounded by our religion, but awakened, excited, employed, directed, and improved."³

The significance of this constant emphasis on reason becomes apparent as soon as we remember the course of subsequent religious discussion. Earlier in the seventeenth century, the prevailing tendency had been to depreciate reason and to minimize its rôle in religion. There had been protests -- from Hales and Chillingworth, for example -- but in no sense did they represent the general attitude of their time. During the middle years of the century, the whole weight of Calvinism had been thrown against any exaltation

1. H. More, True Grounds of the Certainty of Faith.

2. J. Smith, Select Discourses, p. 61.

3. Whichcote, Select Sermons, (ed. 1698), p.298.

of what seemed a part of man's corrupt and unregenerate nature. But in the closing period of the century, the place of reason was so magnified that it became customary in religious discussion to concede its unquestioned authority. Protestant theology in England was steadily returning to an emphasis on reason which had been inherent in its original position, but which had become obscured with time. In this development the Cambridge Platonists played a notable part. Ultimately the progress of "enlightenment" saw reason conceived in narrow, unimaginative terms, which were far removed from the position of the Cambridge men, but it is impossible to understand the emergence of eighteenth century theology if we ignore the development which runs from the early pioneers of a liberal theology through the Cambridge Platonists, the Latitudinarians and the Deists.

For other reasons also the preoccupation of the Cambridge Platonists with reason is important. They asserted its significance because they believed it kept religion abreast of current intellectual developments and prevented it from subsiding into superstition.¹ They regarded it as equally necessary in checking the contemporary trend toward atheism.² Reason made it possible to hope that the bitterness of controversy could be resolved into the mutual self-

1. Cf. S.P.: "Nor will it be possible otherwise to free religion from scorn and contempt, if her priests be not as well skilled in nature as the people, and her champions furnished with as good artillery as her enemies." A New Account, &c, p. 8.

2. More developed this subject at length in his Antidote to Atheism.

respect of intelligent men.¹ Because of reason, they said, we can hope that men will grasp the resplendent truths of God;² above all, it is our assurance that we can achieve a moral and spiritual independence. We can see for ourselves what is good, and we can appreciate it as good because our own insight has recognised its essential worth.³ In an authoritarian age this was the charter of the liberty of the Christian man. The period which ensued saw the question of authority raised repeatedly; it never saw it answered with such luminous discernment or with such reasonable hopes that, after the tyrannies of spiritual compulsion, men would find a freedom which was above licence because it was never beyond reason.

"In the use of Reason and the exercise of virtue we enjoy God,"⁴ and these two activities, so closely associated in Whichcote's words, together represent the most characteristic affirmations of the Cambridge Platonists. Their opponents, who resented the "crying up of reason", reproached them also with advocating "a kind of moral theology." What was intended as a censure would have been accepted as the highest form of praise. They constantly revert to the good life and to the factors in experience which weaken or confirm it.

1. Whichcote, Aphorisms, 58.

2. Ibid, 28.

3. Ibid, 40.

4. Ibid, 121.

The detailed exposition of their ethical theory is no part of our present task,¹ but it is necessary to note why their emphasis was important in seventeenth century thought. To begin with, it is essential to notice that the intimate relation with religion, so characteristic of the treatment of reason, is just as pronounced in the case of morality. The Cambridge Platonists wrote much of the good and the beautiful, but these led, not to abstract virtues, but to the Christian graces. Morality, indeed, was seen as the manifestation of the present energy of the spirit of God.² Equally significant was their treatment of moral ideas. Descartes had suggested that true and false, right and wrong, depended for their validity upon the will of God. They were so because He had decreed it thus. The Cambridge Platonists vehemently objected. Right and wrong belonged to the eternal nature of things; they were part of the law of the ideal world.³ The distinction between them was essential, not arbitrary, and even the will of God could never change it. These eternal and immutable ideas governed the mind of God and the minds of all His rational creatures. Because these moral ideas are imprinted on the will of man, each of us has within himself a guide to conduct both more complete and more dependable than the authority of either church

1. This has been done in painstaking detail in de Pauley, The Candle of the Lord.

2. Cf. Raven, John Ray, Naturalist, p.37.

3. Cudworth, True Intellectual System of the Universe, Vol.II, p.533.

or scripture. Morality, then, was regarded as an integral law of man's being and not as an arbitrary imposition from without. The relation of this emphasis to contemporary thought is immediately apparent. The Platonic tradition is laid under contribution to correct not only the dangers detected in Descartes, but the errors blatantly proclaimed by Hobbes. The claim that right and wrong depended on the will of God might have seemed to guarantee the permanence of ethical distinctions, but the suggestion that they could be determined by the dictates of a human ruler left them at the mercy of an autocrat's caprice.

But if these eternal ideas are really to determine our conduct, man must have some genuine liberty of choice. Any kind of fatalism¹ is certain to destroy even the possibility of moral life. To guarantee the freedom of the will, Cudworth reverted to the idea of reason. The free man was guided by reason, and to be ruled by its dictates was to follow what was most real in one's self. This is the origin of true self-determination, and Cudworth in particular insisted that it was fundamental to any genuine morality.² It was crucial to his refutation both of Descartes

1. Cf. Cudworth's division of fatalists into three kinds : (i) atheistical fatalists; and theistical fatalists, who either (ii) consider that God's will is the ultimate sanction of morality (e.g., Descartes), or (iii) identify God with the course of nature.

2. Cf. J. H. Muirhead, The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy, p.63. In this and the succeeding paragraph I am largely indebted to Professor Muirhead's work.

and Hobbes. If you accepted Descartes' "spurious form of absolute liberty of choice", what became of the power of habit and disposition? It was Cudworth's notable achievement that he realized that the nature of the will and the meaning of freedom had to be carefully examined, not casually assumed. He recognized both the scope of the problem and the method by which it must be solved, but his own answers remained either unpublished or buried amid the formless erudition of his massive works.

In the seventeenth century all philosophy had some reference to theological problems. In the case of the Cambridge Platonists the pressure of the prevailing attitude united with their own absorbing religious interest to direct their attention constantly to theological issues of the most fundamental character. They were philosophers, but their subject matter was religion. Immortality was constantly in their thoughts; although both natural and revealed religion testified to its reality, it seemed to be endangered by the materialism of Thomas Hobbes. But more important than the destiny of the soul is its conviction that the true source of its life is in God, and that His eternal reality stands unshaken. Again and again they reverted to the question of the divine nature, and usually they modified the Puritan emphasis on the power of God by stressing His goodness. It is in Cudworth's major work -- the vast and unwieldy "True Intellectual System of

the Universe" -- that we have the subject discussed with some approach to philosophical precision. Cudworth was convinced that he was dealing with issues of the first importance for his day, and it is with the relation of his argument to the thought of his time that we are primarily concerned. He affirmed the being of God;¹ first he defended His reality against those who currently denied it, and then set forth the positive grounds of his own belief. In his day the critics attacked the idea of God partly because it seemed incomprehensible, partly because of the difficulty inherent in the idea of the infinite. In refuting both these arguments, Cudworth revealed at once the character of contemporary assaults on religion and the quality of his own belief. He agreed that what is inconceivable is void, but he refused to concede that the incomprehensible could be identified with it and similarly dismissed. There are some things which we imperfectly grasp because of the greatness of the subject and the limitations of our minds. But even the idea of God does not really fall within this category. "As where there is more of light there is more of visibility, so where there is more of entity, reality and perfection, there is more of conceptibility and cognoscibility."² Moreover the sense of awe and wonder are not without significance. "A kind of

1. Cudworth, True Intellectual System of the Universe, Vol.II, p.513f.

2. Ibid, Vol.II, p. 519.

ecstasy and pleasing horror...seems to speak much to us in the silent language of nature, that there is some object in the world so much vaster than our minds and thoughts that it is the very same to them that the ocean is to narrow vessels."¹

The attack on the idea of infinity could be met by defining more exactly the true nature of the term. Similarly the charge that religion sprang from "fear, ignorance of causes, and the fictions of politicians" called forth an exposition of the sense in which religion is rational and the sense in which it is not. It may be reasonable, and yet fall short of -- or go beyond -- the exactitudes of formal logic. In man there is an awareness of God which is part of the relevant evidence, and with a sure instinct Cudworth recognized that nothing can explain the phenomena of religious experience except the sense of the infinite within the heart of man.

The arguments which Cudworth refuted indicate the direction taken by anti-religious writers in his time. It is equally important to notice the positive considerations that appealed to him. The ontological argument as revived by Descartes had become part of the theological armory of the age, but Cudworth used it with discrimination, recognized its need of restatement, and finally admitted that the urgent task is not so much to establish the existence of some necessary and eternal being as to determine

1. Cudworth, op.cit., Vol. II, p.519.

His character. Is He perfect in wisdom and love? -- or merely the apotheosis of inert matter. The hierarchy of values convinced Cudworth that the world is unintelligible except in terms of a wise and holy God.

In the later seventeenth century the trend of religious thought was steadily toward rationalism and "enlightenment". At certain points the Cambridge Platonists fostered this tendency and contributed to it, but in one respect they stood aside from the main current of contemporary thought. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, the growing trust in reason led increasingly to a veneration of clear and distinct ideas. But the Cambridge Platonists were all, in some degree, mystics. With loving care they brooded over the obscure passages of the neo-Platonists, and something of the same quality is reflected in their work. Their writings prove both their familiarity with the literature of mysticism, and their ability to examine it with critical discernment.¹ There are, they said, some forms of knowledge -- and those the highest -- which cannot be grasped in conceptual form; they are the product of a personal relationship with God, and we enjoy them in communion with Him. This is what Scripture means when it speaks of "seeing God", and the intellectual satisfaction which it offers is above anything our unaided reason can achieve.²

1. Cf. John Smith's criticism of the via negativa in Select Discourses, p. 426f.

2. Smith, op.cit., p. 166.

"But how sweet and delicious that truth is, which holy and heaven born souls feed upon in their mysterious converse with the Deity, who can tell but they that taste it? When reason once is raised, by the mighty force of the Divine Spirit, into a converse with God, it is turned into sense; that which before was only faith well built upon sure principles (for such our science must be) now becomes vision."¹ For the same reason, More hinted that the knowledge of God can only partially be explained by reason or in the terms that it commands. There are no words adequate to convey what in the last resort is indescribable. How can you explain what happens when the life of God is disclosed within the limits of our life? We have only one resource; we can suggest its meaning as we are able, and then affirm that our human life can ascend to the divine because God has descended and drawn us to Himself.²

These men are manifestly not describing an experience common to most theologians in the second half of the seventeenth century. But if in one respect it set them apart from their contemporaries, in another it emphasized a development of great importance in the intellectual and religious life of the period. The Cambridge Platonists were mystics, but when touching esoteric matters, they did so with a degree of sanity which many continental mystics

1. Smith, op. cit., p. 17.

2. Cf. Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. 294.

conspicuously lack. There is a complete absence of that atmosphere of oppressive extravagance which is unfortunately so common to mystics. Their writings are never reminiscent of bizarre regions wholly beyond normal human experience. The reason is that the Cambridge Platonists rose to the direct apprehension of God in and through nature, not in spite of or beyond it. "God made the universe and all the creatures contained therein as so many glasses wherein He might reflect His own glory. He hath copied forth Himself in the creation; and in this outward world we may read the lovely characters of Divine goodness, power and wisdom."¹ This explains the sanity so characteristic of the Cambridge Platonists, but it also coincides with an important development in seventeenth century thought. The Puritan was not, as a rule, greatly interested in nature; he was apt to see the world as a vale of tribulation, the present scene of his testing and temptation. Certainly it had little direct religious significance. But the notable feature of seventeenth century intellectual life was the development of natural science. The detailed study of the physical world was preparing the way for a wholly new understanding of its character. One of the tasks confronting religious thought was to meet the consequences of this new knowledge and to weave its findings into the fabric of a spiritual view of life. The attitude which merely renounced the world could never have faced

1. John Smith, op.cit., p.438.

this problem in a constructive way, but there is no lack of indications that a definite and reasonably successful attempt was made to bring together the new knowledge and the old faith. By the end of the century, physical science was already proving to be an armory from which apologists could draw formidable weapons to defend the faith.¹ There is no need to exaggerate the contribution of the Cambridge Platonists to the creation of this outlook, but it should certainly not be overlooked, and in at least one instance its results can be clearly seen. The Cambridge Platonists, says Dr. Raven, profoundly influenced the outlook of John Ray; they gave him "a theology in which reason and science could find full exercise, and the highest kind of mysticism go harmoniously with observation and exact knowledge."²

In the years which immediately followed 1660 it was probably a general belief -- though a foolish one -- that changes in religious thought had been arrested. It was natural for the leaders of the Restoration Church to revert to the systems they had known in younger days, but this instinct, so natural in itself but so reactionary in its tendency, took no account of the contemporary forces which it faced. It might be possible to control the manifestations of irresponsible sectarianism, but these no longer

1. Cf. notably in Bentley's Confutation of Atheism.

2. C. E. Raven, John Ray, Naturalist (Cambridge, 1943), p.37.

represented the influences most likely to affect religious thought. Social and intellectual forces of tremendous power were altering the outlook of Englishmen on many subjects. In such an atmosphere, how could theology remain unchanged? New situations were arising, and a new temper had appeared; it was necessary for theology to speak to the point of view which prevailed in the reign of Charles II, not in that of his father of hallowed memory.

Their part in this process of adjustment and restatement emphasises the importance of the Cambridge Platonists. In the days before the Restoration they had begun to set forth an interpretation of the Christian faith which undermined the authority of the prevailing theology, and prepared the way for important subsequent developments. For twenty years after the return of Charles II, they continued, by writing, teaching and preaching, to present their characteristic outlook. Their attitude to reason, their view of morality, their conception of God, their mysticism, their interpretation of Scripture, -- all these raised issues with which every important thinker of the Restoration period was concerned, because these were the subjects to which men's minds were irresistably drawn. But it is well to notice that the Cambridge Platonists reflect, sometimes an attitude likely soon to change, sometimes the actual results of the new outlook.

Throughout the century there had been periodical efforts to bring Christian theology into closer touch with prevailing systems

of thought. We have noted the presence of those who were opposed to any change, but most of the independent thinkers of the century were interested in religious restatement. The remarkable feature of the age, however, is the extent to which this effort to find a new expression of Christianity was prompted by a desire to preserve intact the central affirmations of the historic faith. It was generally assumed that Christianity was true; where it might seem open to question, the fault was wholly due to misunderstandings in the past. Hales at the beginning of the century and Toland at the end both reflect this determination to preserve the essentials of belief, but there is no better example of this outlook than the work of the Cambridge Platonists. They assumed that the central affirmations of the faith are beyond dispute. Christianity is true; men only need to see it as it really is to recognize its value and accept it. What they themselves provided was restatement from within; they criticized the misconceptions, not the underlying truths. It would be futile to try to illustrate in any detail a conviction which so thoroughly permeates their work. But before the century ended there were already protests against what Mr. Willey has called the conservative character of seventeenth century rationalizing.¹ A new attitude had been developing in society. It was natural for Restoration courtiers to scoff at

1. Willey, op.cit., p. 138.

religion; by the time of the coffee house with a destructive attitude was more widely held and its results were more extensive. This was reflected even in serious theological discussion. Toland might loudly profess his loyalty to the Church and its faith, but both those who anticipated his position (e.g., Blount) and those who developed it revealed a spirit at once critical and hostile.

The kind of reinterpretation which the Cambridge Platonists offered is in itself important. The contrast between the writings of John Bunyan and John Smith is only due in part to the different character of the people they addressed. Bunyan wrote in vivid pictorial terms because he thought in them. In this he was true to his Puritan tradition. To speak of the "drama of salvation" was not to use a figure of speech, for nothing else could adequately suggest the forms in which the subject was presented to the believer's mind. But the Cambridge Platonists set forth ideas, not pictures. Everything is less concrete, and consequently tends to be more abstract. Every doctrine, as it reappears, assumes a more generalised form. To Cudworth the Incarnation signifies not so much the Word made flesh in a historical sense as the eternal incarnation of the Logos. The sin we are save from is "nothing but straitness, poverty, and non-entity." Where the Puritan had affirmed facts, the Cambridge Platonists emphasised values. This resulted both in loss and gain. It curbed the extravagant

literalism -- even materialism -- of certain kinds of doctrine. It brought men back to the purposes which had often been obscured by the distorted dumb-shows on which their minds had dwelt. But by the end of the century it issued in a form of theology which steadily lost in vitality as its abstract character grew more pronounced.

The seventeenth century saw the beginning of the modern movement in philosophy. An age which produced Bacon and Descartes, Locke and Leibnitz might well claim a distinguished place in the history of thought, but even among such contemporaries the contribution of the Cambridge Platonists is too distinctive to be ignored. They represented a return to Greek philosophy which had important consequences. They asserted the essential congruity of Christianity and Platonism, and reestablished an association between the two which in many quarters still persists. They claimed that the nature of God should be interpreted in terms of the Idea of the Good; wherever belief is not associated with a faith in the supremacy of truth and goodness it ends, they said, either in formalism or in superstition.

Closely parallel was their statement of the principles of idealist philosophy. In Cudworth we have a serious attempt to express in modern terms a satisfactory alternative to the naturalism of Hobbes and the empty spiritualism of Descartes.

In so doing he presented the essential elements of idealism. It is not necessary to recapitulate them here, but the alliance between theology and idealism has been so persistent and often so fruitful that its first appearance in seventeenth century thought requires at least passing notice.

Few motives inspired the Cambridge Platonists so constantly as their dread of superstition. They had seen what its consequences might be, and much though they feared any repetition, they realized that the reaction from blind incredulity might drive men into atheism. John Smith wrote with these twin dangers always before his mind. The same appalling alternatives inspired More to produce his "Antidote to Atheism". In opposition to superstition and unbelief, they set forth the claims of "religion...in truth and power." In their opposition to superstition, the Cambridge Platonists struck a note echoed by almost all their contemporaries and successors. One of the unvarying features of later seventeenth century religious thought is its attack on all the distortions which ignorance can introduce into the domain of faith. In many cases, this was only a shallow pose, dictated by nothing more profound than subservience to the ruling conventions of the age. Superstition was regarded as the mark of the sectaries; everything connected with the sectaries was repugnant; therefore superstition ought to be attacked. But the whole atmosphere of the age

encouraged the same tendency. The steady trend toward greater confidence in reason made superstition seem particularly abhorrent, and as "enlightenment" increased there was a real danger that anything beyond the narrow limits of common sense would be repudiated as a superstition. In the Cambridge Platonists the protest was all the more effective because they both attacked the abuse and suggested its remedy. They advocated a rational theology which was both devout and penetrating, and they did not overturn the forms of popular belief without offering an alternative that would satisfy both the intellect and the emotions.

With unusual clarity the Cambridge Platonists set forth the serious responsibility which Christianity lays upon the individual. Every man must apply his own reason to the problems of belief and action. Hobbes, they felt, had threatened all ethical realities by subordinating good conduct to obedience to the ruler, and this lent added emphasis to their protest against anything that imperilled each man's sense of his responsibility. This explains their insistence on the importance of personal religion and their steady preference of reason to authority and of altruism to self-interest. Similarly they opposed centralization in church or state; in religion it imperilled the judgment of the individual, in politics it endangered his freedom of action. But in stressing the importance of the insight and responsibility of the instructed

man, the Cambridge Platonists stood virtually alone. No one else recognised so clearly the dangers of authority, or emphasised with equal discernment the importance of the truth which each man grasps for himself and then uses as the foundation of good conduct.

Given such an attitude to the individual, toleration followed as an inescapable obligation. If a man did not see the truth, he must be shown it by the methods of persuasion; if he did, no amount of coercion could justify him in forsaking it. The whole philosophical position of the Platonists was a foundation for their doctrine of toleration. Their view of the place of reason in religion and their conception of morality and its implications led naturally to the belief that toleration was not a concession granted because expediency demanded it, but a right inseparable from the inherent dignity of man.

There is no satisfactory measure of the relative importance of religious writers, but the extent of their influence at least indicates to what degree they moulded later thought. In this respect the Cambridge Platonists occupy a peculiar position. They did not found a school, and yet they profoundly affected their successors. Because of their distinctive and inimitable qualities they seem slightly isolated from contemporary thought, and yet subsequent developments in theology are unintelligible if we ignore their influence. The names of those who acknowledged a debt to the Cambridge Platonists in itself suggests their importance.

The thought of Glanvill and Norris was so coloured by the writings of the Cambridge men that they are sometimes treated as members of the group. Cumberland also stood on the vague frontier between the Latitudinarians and the Cambridge Platonists. Stillingfleet, Tillotson, Patrick, Fowler, and Burnet -- the Latitudinarians, in fact -- might modify the teachings of the Platonists, but the imprint of the older men was upon them to the end. In ethics, the Cambridge Platonists established a tradition which determined the character of English moral philosophy for a century and a half. In political theory they interpreted the idea of sovereignty in a way which Locke expanded, popularized, and established as the ruling principle in English political thought. But the Cambridge Platonists are not important simply because of the nature and extent of their influence. They represent as profound a restatement of Christianity as English theology has produced, and their unswerving conviction of the grandeur and scope of the divine activity gives to their writings a dignity and a persuasive power which neither the changes of fashion nor the passage of time have obscured.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE LATITUDINARIANS.

A name given in contempt is often retained for the sake of convenience. "Latitudinarianism" was coined as a designation for the Cambridge Platonists,¹ but it has held its place because there is no better term to describe the liberalism of the latter part of the seventeenth century. A feebler nickname never achieved success. From the very first it was found to be long and cumbersome, and "the cholerick gentlemen" who used it had to teach "their tongues to pronounce it as if it were shorter than it is by four or five syllables."² It started as a term of abuse;³ because it was comprehensive it became permanent and ultimately became a designation which implied respect.

The circumstances surrounding its rise explain the persistence both of the name and of the phenomenon which it described. A pamphlet⁴ published shortly after the Restoration ostensibly contains the reply of a Cambridge man to the enquiries of a friend from Oxford. Wherever he goes, remarks the friend, he meets this word, at once so popular and so ill-defined. He has heard it used both from

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1. G. Burnet, History of My Own Time (ed. by O. Airy), Vol. I, p.334.
 2. S.P., A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude Men; Together With Some Reflections on the New Philosophy (1662), p.4.
 3. "A Latitude-man, therefore,...is an image of Clouts, that men set up to encounter with for want of a real enemy; it is a convenient name to repraach a man that you have a spite to; 'tis what you will, and you may affix it unto whom you will; 'tis something will serve to talk to, when all other discourse fails." A Brief Account, &c, p.4-5.
 4. S.P., A Brief Account, &c. The author is usually identified as Simon Patrick, though the attribution has been questioned.

pulpits and in taverns, but never by anyone who could adequately explain its meaning. This fleeting glimpse of public opinion in the years immediately following the Restoration is the most important thing the pamphlet contains. It enables us to sense the eagerness with which people would seize on any alternative to the familiar forms which theology had recently assumed. The Calvinism of the Puritans was defeated and discredited, but many Englishmen had no great relish for the high churchmanship of Laud. They did not wish to choose between the bigotry of the one and the rigidity of the other. Moreover, Latitudinarianism had the specious appeal of being a new theology for a new day. The Restoration had been an important change, and men were interested in a new system of thought that gave promise of keeping in touch with the temper of the age. Before the period was over, the Latitudinarians had proved decisively that they understood the mentality of **their** time. Whether they really met its needs is a different question; they certainly sensed its temper and spoke in terms it could understand. Before the R_evolution the Latitudinarians were the most influential preachers in London,¹ and after 1688 their ascendancy on the bishops' bench was unchallenged.

1. Patrick was at St. Paul's Covent Garden; Lloyd and Tenison successively at St. Martin-in-the-Fields; Tillotson at Lincoln's Inn Chapel and St. Lawrence Jewry; Burnet at the Rolls Chapel; Stillingfleet at St. Andrew's Holborn and St. Paul's Cathedral. Glanvill, whom I have included with the Latitudinarians, was rector of Bath, and consequently not a Londoner.

Latitudinarianism was a term originally applied to the Cambridge Platonists, but it was soon transferred to a much more inclusive group than a band of teachers from one university and of one philosophic school. In seventeenth century literature it is a word which needs careful watching; contemporaries had seen its usefulness as a name for the vague liberalism which was increasingly prevalent, and the term is often inexactly used. Sometimes it refers to the Cambridge Platonists; more often it does not. Subsequently it has, by general consent, been applied to the progressive theologians of the Restoration and Revolutionary periods. The boundaries of the group are ill-defined; it was claimed, said Bishop Fowler, that a Latitudinarian was "a gentleman of a wide swallow,"¹ and the same may be said of the term itself.

The Latitudinarians can be clearly distinguished from the Cambridge Platonists, but the relation of the one group to the other is unusually close. Most of the leading Latitudinarians were Cambridge men; they had been taught by Smith or Cudworth or More, and had doubtless listened to Whichcote preach in Holy Trinity Church. Patrick was a friend and avowed admirer of John Smith; he preached the sermon at his funeral, and the tribute,

1. E. Fowler, Principles and Practices of Certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England, Abusively Called Latitudinarians,....In a Free Discourse Between Two Intimate Friends, (1670), p.10.

though slightly extravagant, is manifestly sincere. Tillotson and Stillingfleet and Tenison were all educated at Cambridge, and, to put the matter beyond doubt, Burnet has assured us that the main influence in moulding the thought of the Latitudinarians was the teaching and example of the Cambridge Platonists.¹ At many points this influence can be traced in the mature writings of the younger group of men. They emphasize reason and exalt morality, but the differences between them are as important as the similarities. There is a vein of genius in the Cambridge Platonists which their able but pedestrian successors lack. In Smith and Whichcote there is a depth which is missing in Patrick and Stillingfleet. You can transmit a certain kind of rationalism, but mysticism is a subtler and more elusive matter. Something of incalculable value has faded into the light of common day.

It was natural for the Latitudinarians to stress the rôle of reason in religion. That, as we have seen, was one of the characteristic contributions of the Cambridge Platonists to seventeenth century religious thought, and for Stillingfleet and Tillotson an emphasis on reason was an integral part of their heritage. It was in keeping also with the temper of the day. The recent excesses of certain of the Puritan sects had left all sober men with an ingrained horror of "fanaticism". They reacted

1. "The most eminent of those who were formed under these great men were Tillotson, Stillingfleet and Patrick." Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol. I, p.335. Cf. also (Burnet), A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of John (Tillotson), Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, &c, pp. 11, 12.

against the "enthusiast" and all his ways. Over against unregulated inspiration -- a force unpredictable and beyond control -- the Latitudinarians set the authority of reason. But the Puritans were not their only foes. At times the struggle with Romanism flared up into fierce activity, but guerilla fighting was constantly in progress. Here also the Anglican case was solidly based on reason. The Roman Catholics believed they could impale their Protestant opponents on the horns of a dilemma. There were only two alternatives, they said; you could accept the authority of an infallible church, or you could subside into deism. It was of no avail to appeal to Scripture; unless authenticated by a church which could not err, the Bible had no decisive voice in religious controversy. The authority of the Bible, retorted Stillingfleet, is firmly established; it rests not on a single irrefutable argument, but on the sum of many considerations. By itself none of these may be conclusive, but taken together they provide the moral certainty which is all that rational men can ask or need.¹ The appeal, that is to say, is to considerations which an intelligent person can value and assess; to weigh the sum of evidence and reach an enlightened conclusion is a rational activity. Against atheism also the consistent appeal was to reason and its

1. Cf. especially the discussion which arose out of Romanist resuscitation of the Laud-Fisher controversy (Labyrinthus Cantuariensis, 1663). Stillingfleet's answer was entitled A Rational Account of the Grounds of the Protestant Religion, Works, (1709), Vol. V, especially p. 195.

authority.¹ It was "the great unreasonableness" of the unbeliever's attitude that Stillingfleet undertood to prove,² and he triumphantly concluded that, judged by reason, "all the pretences of the atheist" are "weak, ridiculous and impertinent."³

The Latitudinarians were more ready to praise reason than to define it. As a rule they used the word to signify, in a rather general way, the exercise of all the mental faculties. Imagination, of course, was thoroughly suspect, and reason was apt to be equated with orderly processes of thought. They refused to limit it to "the logic of the schools", which a rigid Aristotelianism had made odious to progressive minds. Perhaps the nearest approach to a definition was given by Burnet when he claimed that the leadings of the divine spirit do not supersede reason, if by reason we mean "the clear conviction of our faculties."⁴ It was the avowed purpose of the Latitudinarians to eliminate the irrational from religion; the use of our mental powers, they said, can only advance the cause of faith. What they advocated, indeed, was a restoration of reason to its rightful place. A disorderly and chaotic "enthusiasm"

1. Cf. Glanvill, *λογουβοησκειν*, or a Seasonable Recommendation and Defence of Reason in the Affairs of Religion, Against Infidelity Scepticism, and Fanaticism of All Sorts (1670).

2. Stillingfleet, Origines Sacrae, p.375.

3. Ibid, p.392.

4. Burnet, essay on The Beginnings and Advances of a Spiritual Life (appended to Scugals Life of God in the Soul of Man).

cannot lead us to an intelligent comprehension of the truth, and to grasp the truth is "the most natural perfection of the rational soul."¹ It was to this end that man was made, and one of the curious features of the religious discussion of the period is the free appeal to an hypothetical Adam, an ideal creature in complete possession of perfect rational powers.²

The exaltation of reason places a correspondingly high value on the kind of religion that reason can discover for itself. Most of the Latitudinarians were careful to emphasize that natural religion must be supplemented with the disclosures of revelation, but they dwelt with real satisfaction on the fact that the mind, without appeal to any extraneous authority, could grasp in broad outline a religion which included the essentials of belief.³ In his essay on The Agreement of Reason and Religion, Glanvill enumerated three points which he regarded as necessary to true religion -- (i) the existence of God; (ii) the providence of God; (iii) the reality of moral distinctions.⁴ At times, indeed, Glanvill was content to expound a very general form of theism,

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1. Stillingfleet, Origines Sacrae, pp.1-2. All references to this work are to the third edition, 1666.
 2. Glanvill, The Vanity of Dogmatizing, pp.2, 70f: Stillingfleet, op.cit., p. 2.
 3. Cf. Stillingfleet's repeated claim that "the idea of God is most consonant to Reason", pp.367, 371, &c.
 4. Glanvill, Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion (1676), Essay V, p.3. Glanvill adds (p.4) four subsidiary points (also very general in character), but even when so augmented this stands in striking contrast to what earlier writers would have accepted as an outline of religious essentials.

Which showed little apparent relation to the doctrines of Christian theology. Stillingfleet was more cautious, and Tillotson left the whole question in a much more nebulous condition, but all of them accepted with alacrity the testimony of reason to a natural religion.

From the witness of reason, the Latitudinarians drew three important inferences. The first concerned the importance, both practical and speculative, of immortality. On this subject the evidence of natural religion had always been accepted as particularly clear, but wherever they turned the Latitudinarians saw the importance of immortality called in question. It was attacked by the theoretical atheists, and Stillingfleet gravely remarked that this was a tendency which would "degrade the rational soul so far below herself as to make her become like the beasts that perish."¹ It was ignored by those who disregarded the imperatives of the Gospel; faced with Restoration morals, Patrick maintained that "eternal rewards in the life to come" are "the great motive to well doing."²

The second inference was that reason, by recognising the limitations latent in our knowledge, is the true corrective to dogmatism. So far from making us overconfident, reason encourages diffidence and humility. The first step in all rational activity,

1. Stillingfleet, op.cit., Preface to the Reader. Cf. Glanvill, Essays, &c, IV, p.8.

2. Patrick, Friendly Debate Between a Conformist and a Non-Conformist (1668), p.27.

whether in religion or in science, must be "to destroy the confidence of assertions and establish a prudent reservedness and modesty in opinions."¹ We are surrounded by such unfathomable mysteries that any form of dogmatism is intolerable arrogance. Even when he has outlined the extent of human ignorance and proved that confidence is only folly, Glanvill feels that he has "drawn but a cockle shell of water from the ocean. Whichever way I look upon, within the amplitude of Heaven and earth, is evidence of human ignorance; for all things are great darkness to us, and we are so to ourselves. The plainest things are as obscure as the most confessedly mysterious; and the plants we tread upon are as much above us as the stars and heavens. The things that touch us are as distant as the poles, and we are as much strangers to ourselves as to the people of the Indies."²

In the light of reason, superstitious beliefs and practices, whether in religion or elsewhere, are seen to be utterly indefensible. This was the third inference drawn from the authority of reason. "I never found a disposition to superstition in my temper," remarks Burnet; "I was rather inclined to be philosophical" (i.e., to explain things scientifically) "upon all occasions."³ "I have ever hated and despised superstition of

1. Glanvill, Essays, &c, I (Against Confidence in Philosophy and Matters of Speculation), p.1. Cf. also Essays, II (Of Scepticism and Certainty), p. 39f.

2. Glanvill, op.cit., I, p.32.

3. Burnet, quoted in Clarke and Foxcroft, Life of Gilbert Burnet, p.xlv.

all sorts," he says elsewhere, "and have found a great deal of it even among those that pretend to be the farthest from it."¹ Even Glanvill, though fierce in denouncing the "sadducees" who deny the reality of evil spirits, rejoices at the decline of superstition; we are no longer at the mercy, he says, of fanciful explanations of meteors and other natural phenomena.²

The cult of reason increased the authority of natural religion, but the Latitudinarians were anxious to prove that it accorded very closely with revealed Christianity. Their tendency was to frame a reasonable system of belief and then demonstrate that it was actually the same as the traditional faith. This process was constantly at work; natural and revealed religion were summoned each in turn to reinforce the prestige of the other. The status of the first was established by proving its essential identity with the second, while the validity of the second was sustained by the witness of the first. Stillingfleet was continually defending revelation by an appeal to reason. He proved that the Mosaic history must be true because it was reasonable, and he established the credibility of the whole idea of revelation on purely rational grounds. Yet, though willing to show that revelation has the support of reason, he was careful to insist that its authority is ultimately greater. He offered "several

1. Quoted in Clarke and Foxcroft, op.cit., p.248.

2. Glanvill, Essays, &c, IV (The Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion), p.8. In Philosophia Pia, Glanvill explains how science helps religion against her four chief enemies, of which one is superstition. He recognizes two kinds of superstition; either kind is more dangerous to religion than atheism is. Op.cit., p.13f.

grounds for divine revelation from natural light," but in defining the relation of the two he laid down the general principle that "the immediate dictates of natural light are not to be the measure of divine revelation."¹ Step by step he disclosed the nature of God's purpose as revealed in His dealings with mankind. From the remotest beginnings God has unfolded His plan and declared His will.² But how are we to know that these things are really true? Though reason can support revelation, by the very nature of things it cannot prove it. No arguments that the human mind alone can advance are able to establish the truth of what revelation declares. How, then, do we know that we are not deceived? Miracles supply the answer. They are the proof of what revelation proclaims. When Moses declares the law of God he is to be trusted because he confirms his claims with miracles. When Christ manifests "the sweetness and grace of the Gospel", miracles again afford the demonstration of its truth. "Now what conviction can there be to any sober mind concerning Divine Authority in any person without such a power of miracles going along with him, when he is to deliver some new doctrine to the world to be believed, I confess I cannot understand."³ Consequently we reach the conclusion that the relation of faith and reason is close and intimate, but ultimately the authority of

1. This principle is enunciated and expanded in Book II, Chapter V of Origines Sacrae.

2. Cf. de Pauley, The Candle of the Lord (London, 1937), p.200.

3. Stillingfleet, op.cit., p.143; cf. also pp.147-8.

faith is greater. It can vindicate its claims by arguments which, though sufficiently rational once they have been advanced, can never be supplied by reason alone. The certainty of faith, says Stillingfleet, is as great as that of reason, but its grounds are stronger.¹ The Latitudinarians, it is evident, did their utmost to make the best of both worlds. Against the "fanatics" they maintained the essential congruity between reason and revelation; against the pure rationalists they insisted on the supreme importance of the truths which, because they are beyond the reach of unaided reason, God has disclosed. But the Latitudinarians were more conscious of the challenge from the first group than from the second, and consequently the characteristic features of Christian doctrine were generally overlaid with a veneer of natural morality.

In the seventeenth century the question of authority had been raised in so many forms that no group of progressive thinkers could evade it. The Latitudinarians were quite satisfied that the authority of antiquity was overrated, and had often been seriously abused. The practice of silencing discussion with a quotation was detrimental both to enlightenment and to learning. The elaborate parade of authorities had combined with an infinite ingenuity of structure to make preaching almost unintelligible to the common man, and Tillotson's type of homiletics represented the most popular and effective protest against smothering the sermon

1. Stillingfleet, op.cit., p.345.

with quotations. A superstitious reverence for the past is one of the perversions to which authority is always subject. "We adhere to the determinations of our fathers as if their opinions were entailed upon us."¹ Quite apart from other serious consequences, this regard for antiquity had cramped the development of natural science, which had advanced most rapidly where the past had been least able to bind it.² In due course this protest against authority was carried a great deal further than the Latitudinarians would have approved. They rebelled against the use to which the classics had been put, but they believed there was a legitimate authority which should be carefully conserved. Glanvill did not intend any protest he made to be wrested to disparage Christian antiquity. He refused to be party to any attempt "to gain credit for new conceits in theology.....No, here the old paths were undoubtedly the best,.....and I put as much difference between the pretended new lights and old truths, as I do between the sun and an evanid meteor; though," he adds, "I confess in philosophy I am a seeker."² This difference of approach he justifies by an appeal to the different nature and history of the two disciplines; theology began with full brightness, but science in obscurity.

1. Glanvill, op.cit., I, p.26, praises Galileo, who "without a crime out-saw all antiquity, and was not afraid to believe his eyes, in reverence to Aristotle and Ptolemy."

2. Ibid, p.28.

The Bible consequently retained its sovereign and unchallenged place. It teaches us, said Stillingfleet, what we should believe and it shows us how we ought to act. The grand conclusion toward which the chief theological work of the Latitudinarians moves ponderously forward is the assertion of "the divine authority of the Scriptures." Six hundred closely printed pages were not too much for such a task, and the satisfaction which Origines Sacrae aroused is reflected in Burnet's recommendation of the book as the most suitable kind of reading for ordination candidates. The areas, then, within which authority could be challenged were carefully defined; but the citadel of revelation remained inviolate. This was a compromise with which bolder spirits would not be content; the Latitudinarians consequently represent a transitional stage between the authoritarian approach so common earlier in the seventeenth century and the sceptical outlook of the generation which followed.

The Latitudinarians lived through one of the most remarkable developments in the intellectual history of mankind. The seventeenth century saw the rise of the modern scientific movement, and in its latter years, and in England, the new understanding of nature was unfolding with bewildering rapidity. The Latitudinarians may not have been familiar with all its details, and certainly most of them did not grasp its ultimate significance, but they were intelligently

interested in what was happening, and sympathetic to the claims of the new science. Many of them were more than enlightened spectators. Wilkins played a worthy part in the founding of the Royal Society, and his contemporaries regarded him as a notable scientist in his own right. Ward was equally active in scientific pursuits. Sprat was the historian of the Royal Society, and Glanvill its panegyrist and defender. Because Tillotson had a "love for the real philosophy of nature," and believed that the "study of it is the most solid support of religion,"¹ he sought and obtained membership in the Royal Society. When Burnet found that a discreet withdrawal from politics left him with greater leisure, he turned to the study of mathematics and chemistry.

Behind this interest lay a firm belief that any separation of religion and science would work to the detriment of both. "How providentially are you met together," exclaimed Glanvill to the Royal Society, "in days when people of weak heads on the one hand, and vile affections on the other, have made an unnatural divorce between being wise and good."² He believed that by defining more carefully the respective provinces of religion and science, the rôle of each would become clearer, and that conflicts between them would disappear. "Real philosophy" is useful to religion, and the two

1. T. Birch, Life of Tillotson, p.ccxvii.

2. Glanvill, Scepsis Scientifica (1665), Address to the Royal Society.

will support each other better if "four heads" are kept in mind. God, he says, is to be praised for His works; His works are to be studied by those who would praise Him for them; the study of nature and God's works is very serviceable to religion; the ministers and professors of religion ought not to discourage but to promote the knowledge of nature and the works of its author.¹

The relations of church and state aroused in seventeenth century minds an interest of passionate intensity. The question had practical importance, no doubt, but it was its religious significance that arrested attention. This is a subject that will require more detailed attention at a later stage, but for the present it is important to notice how deeply the Latitudinarians were involved in the change which took place in Anglican thought on the subject at the end of the century. At the beginning of the period passive obedience came back with the theory of the divine right of kings. By the end of the century, the Revolution with its attendant developments had practically eliminated the doctrine from English theology. The Latitudinarians had accepted as implicitly as any one else the identification between loyalty to the Church of England and acceptance of passive obedience, but with the fall of James II they abandoned the theory more quickly and more publicly than any other group of churchmen. This caused a good deal of comment, and from some quarters they were bitterly attacked.

1. Glanvill, Essays, &c, IV, pp.1-2.

Their explanations of why they made the change so rapidly are fragmentary and incomplete, but it is not difficult to detect some of the reasons. As prominent London clergymen they had seen in practical experience what unquestioning obedience to a sovereign's will could mean when the king was a fanatical Roman Catholic. Their open-minded attitude to many issues made it easier to re-examine their presuppositions when the logic of events had shown them to be unsound. The very fact that they were more interested in conduct than in theory may have played its part. Whatever the cause, the spectacle of the Latitudinarians as bishops by appointment of William and Mary was the symbol for the end of the century that passive obedience was dead.

Slowly and with great reluctance the seventeenth century recognized that religious differences might find expression in separation religious organisations. Until 1660 it was agreed by practically all parties that dissent had no real status in the country, and this was also the assumption underlying the Clarendon Code and the repressive measures of the Restoration period. In their attitude to dissenters, the Latitudinarians anticipated the solution put forward in the Act of Toleration. Beyond all others they were willing to consider the possibility of comprehension, and their whole attitude was marked by a reasonable and conciliatory spirit. Stillingfleet's Irenicum attempted to prove that many of

the issues which divided English religious life could not be settled by an appeal to apostolical authority, and consequently differences need not lead to separation. Stillingfleet modified his attitude as time went on, but his Irenicum held an important place among the contributions of the Latitudinarians to current discussion.¹ John Beardmore tells us that Wilkins was best known to his contemporaries "for his great moderation" to the nonconformists.² Tillotson's critics bespattered him with abuse because of "his tender methods of treating with dissenters and his endeavours to unite all Protestants among themselves."³ As the period progressed and the threat of Romanism grew, the folly of Protestant division served as a practical argument to reinforce more theoretical considerations,⁴ but their moderation can be traced to their attitude to the kind of issue which divided Anglican and Puritan. Burnet quotes with approval Henry More's remark that "none of these things (matters of church government and ritual) were so good as to make men good, nor so bad as to make men bad, but might be either good or bad according to the hands into which they fell."⁵ The

1. Cf. W. H. Hutton, in D.N.B.

2. John Beardmore, Memorials of John Tillotson, p.cclxx (Appendix I to Birch's Life of Tillotson).

3. Birch, Life of Tillotson, p.xxi. Cf. Burnet, Sermon Preached at the Funeral of John...Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, (1695), pp.11, 17.

4. Burnet, A Sermon Preached in the Chapel of St. James Before His Highness the Prince of Orange, 23 Dec., 1688 (London, 1689), p.13.

5. Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol. I, p.335.

remark can be duplicated a score of times in Stillingfleet's Irenicum. The attitude of the Latitudinarians to nonconformists could justify itself by an appeal to Christian charity, but it had the added advantage of achieving the results which persecution sought but never secured. The dissenters responded, and many conformed.¹

The Latitudinarians were liberals in an age of transition. It followed that they were often misunderstood, and (since it was still the seventeenth century) violently abused. They were attacked both for their moderation to dissenters and for the assumed affiliations of their thought. The age had produced great names in abundance, and often the authors were little understood but greatly feared. The Latitudinarians were not Hobbists, but on occasion they were accused of being such. Glanvill was an ardent admirer of Descartes, but many of his contemporaries were far from sure that the results of the Cartesian philosophy were desirable. The most common

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1. Burnet, Sermon Preached at the Funeral of...John...Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,&c, 30 Nov., 1694, p.11. In this connection note also the tribute to the Latitudinarians of a convinced dissenter, Memorials of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, p.200.
 2. Cf. A Letter Out of Suffolk to a Friend in London (1695), p.11. Cf. also Miscellaneous Remarks on the Sermons of Archbishop Tillotson, by John Jortin, where Tillotson's attitude to the Socinians is contrasted with the following example from "the masterly and impartial hand of South": "The Socinians are impious blasphemers, whose infamous pedigree runs back (from wretch to wretch) in a direct line to the devil himself; and who are fitter to be crushed by the civil magistrate, as destructive to government and society, than to be confuted as merely heretics in religion."

accusation was that the Latitudinarians were disguised Socinians.¹

The bitterness of the attacks can be conveyed only by quotation.

In a work entitled The Charge of Socinianism Against Dr. Tillotson (1695), we are assured that Tillotson's sermons "are all the genuine effects of Hobbism, which loosens the notions of religion, takes from it all that is spiritual, ridicules whatever is called supernatural; it reduces God to matter and religion to nature. In this school Dr. Tillotson has these many years held the first form, and now diffuses its poison from a high station...His politics are Leviathan, and his religion is latitudinarian, which is none; that is, nothing positive, but against everything that is positive in other religions; whereby to reduce all religion to an uncertainty, and determinable only by civil power...He is owned by the atheistical wits of all England as their true primate and apostle...He leads them not only the length of Socinianism,...but to call in question all revelation."² This charge of Socinianism was one which the Latitudinarians were anxious to refute. In order to meet it, Tillotson published in 1693 the sermons on Christology which he had preached in 1679-80. Burnet repudiated with characteristic vehemence the charge that "the orthodox Latitudinarians were concealed Socinians; and that they acquiesced in Trinitarian formulas for the sake of lucre or reputation."³

1. See note 2 on page 91.

2. The Charge of Socinianism Against Dr. Tillotson (1695), p.13.

3. Burnet, Four Discourses, quoted in Clarke and Foxcroft, Life of Burnet, p. 333.

At this point the discussion of Latitudinarianism and what it stood for had degenerated into mere recrimination, but the indeterminate character of so much Latitudinarian preaching lent itself both to misunderstanding and abuse.

The doctrinal vagueness which their adversaries twisted to suit the ends of controversy was to a certain extent the inevitable result of preoccupation with other things. The Latitudinarians intentionally avoided certain theological issues because they were satisfied that discussion of such topics led to no good end. There were some subjects whose "effect has been to teach men to dispute rather than to live."¹ Endless debate about theological niceties merely obscured the true character of the Christian religion. It was Tillotson's conviction that "the great design of Christianity was the reforming men's natures, and governing their actions, the restraining their appetites and passions, the softening their tempers, and sweetening their humours, the composing their affections, and raising their minds above the interests and follies of this present world, to the hope and pursuit of endless blessedness. And he considered the whole Christian doctrine as a system of principles all tending to this. He looked on men's contending about lesser matters, or about subtleties relating to those that are greater, as one of the chief practices of the powers of darkness, to defeat the true ends for which the Son of God came into the world, and

1. John Beardmore, *op.cit.*, pp. cclxxi-cclxxii.

that they did lead men into much dry and angry work, who while they were hot in making parties and settling opinions, became so much the slacker in those great duties, which were chiefly designed by the Christian doctrine."¹ This was the occasion of abuse both in his own day and since. But Tillotson was a "moral preacher", not because he had no choice, but because he was sincerely convinced that an emphasis on morality was the great need of his contemporaries. It was his avowed purpose to awaken an appreciation of the natural and indispensable character of moral duties. The law of nature no less than the content of revelation placed men under an obligation to do the right. The Christian, of course, was fortunate in having "the powerful motives and assistance, which our blessed Saviour in His Gospel offers us, to enable and encourage us to discharge our duty", but there is also a "law in our members" which no human being can neglect. But for some reason the moral appeal of the Latitudinarians lacks both majesty and urgency. Prudential motives are always creeping in,² and the specious reasonableness of mere common sense is always present. But though there is nothing exhilarating about the demands of the Latitudinarians, no one familiar with Restoration social history will question the need of their emphasis on moral

1. Burnet, A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of...John..Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,&c, pp.31-2.

2. Cf. Tillotson: "And surely nothing is more likely to prevail with wise and considerate men to become religious, than to be thoroughly convinced, that religion and happiness, our duty and our interest, are but one and the same thing considered under several notions." Tillotson's Sermons, Vol.I, p.25.

obligation, nor dismiss with easy disparagement mere "moral preaching." Patrick was quite justified in claiming that under certain circumstances "spiritual" preachers can be positively dangerous. "They treat of these things (actual duties) in such a manner as not to bring them down to meddle with our lives."¹ The Restoration period needed nothing so much as some one to "meddle" with current standards, and the Latitudinarians attempted a necessary, even though a difficult and thankless, task.

It is well to do your duty for its own sake; but if you do, the result is usually some form of good work. The one issues in the other, and it was natural for the Latitudinarians to dwell on the importance of both. They expected concrete results to follow from their preaching; it stressed duty, but the fruits were to be seen in conduct.² Bull wrote so persuasively of the importance of good works that he was charged with Socinianism, and it was probably this anti-Calvinistic trend of their preaching that led so often to this particular accusation. The Puritans, if we may believe Patrick, were afraid that "the insisting so much on good works is legal";³ the Latitudinarians strenuously maintained the opposite view. What they preached to others, they practised themselves. Patrick and Tenison

1. S. Patrick, A Friendly Debate, &c, p. 41.

2. Birch, Life of Tillotson, p. cclxxi.

3. Patrick, op.cit., p.12.

started the movement for founding charity schools,¹ and Tillotson and Patrick were generous supporters of Thomas Gouge in his philanthropic work among the poor people of Wales.² The record of the good works of these men is scattered through the literature of the period. The sober and pedestrian virtues of this school -- so uninspiring and so uninspired -- make them the easy butt of ridicule, but any judgment of their work must give consideration to its fruits. It was not only in their private concerns that they were zealous in good works. Out of the period dominated by their influence grew the great humanitarian movements which have so profoundly influenced English life.

The Latitudinarians might distrust "enthusiasm", but their cautious propriety should not obscure the genuinely religious element in their life and work. They were often better than their doctrine. They might not encourage anything that would suggest active proselytizing,³ but most of them had the strong pastoral devotion which common sense alone can never inspire. Patrick remained in his parish throughout the Plague, even though persuaded that the decision would prove fatal to himself.⁴ Burnet's relations with anyone for whom he felt

1. Patrick, Autobiography, p. 128. Cf. Overton, Life in the Church of England from 1660 to 1714, p.61.

2. Patrick, op.cit., p.214; cf. Schlatter, Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660 to 1688, p. 128.

3. Glanvill, Essays,&c, IV, p.32. He is not, said Glanvill, greatly concerned to change the minds of others, even though he judges them to be mistaken, "so long as virtue, the interests of religion, the peace of the world, and their own, are not prejudiced by their errors."

4. Patrick, op.cit., p.55.

responsible form one of the finest traits in his curiously mixed character. His account of the conversion and death of the Earl of Rochester is almost the only work he wrote in which his insensitiveness and bad taste never obtrude themselves, and it is manifestly the work of a man of genuinely religious conviction. His sense of the supreme importance of the pastoral office gives to his book on the subject the simplicity and sincerity which make it still worth reading. Here we see most clearly the spiritual ardour which underlay his Latitudinarianism, and understand something of the missionary zeal which at times showed itself in such unexpected ways. The Latitudinarians grew up in an age in which an intense personal religion was prized and cultivated. They rejected its outward forms, but retained something of its inward reality. But their protest against the abuses of personal religion was clearer than their witness to its abiding value. They transmitted the one but not the other. They were the heirs of Puritanism and the ancestors of the eighteenth century, but what they received from the one they did not pass on to the other. They consequently represent an important stage in the decisive change which was taking place in the spirit of English religious life. If you ignore the Latitudinarians you cannot explain the emergence either of Deism or of eighteenth century orthodoxy.

Latitudinarianism stood for a temper rather than for a creed. It was primarily an outlook on life and its religious significance.

Because of the close relation between the character of that outlook and the prevailing spirit of the age, Latitudinarianism became a profoundly important phenomenon.

The temper of the Latitudinarians was compounded of many elements, but the most obvious was the sovereign assurance that religious belief was eminently reasonable. Irrationality had so recently run riot in English religious life that it seemed necessary "to make all people feel the reasonableness of the truths, as well as of the precepts of the Christian religion."¹ Stillingfleet was constantly recurring to this note,² and Patrick regarded it as the decisive element in religious discussion.³ It was the quality in Tillotson which the Deists applauded with such embarrassing cordiality.⁴ This emphasis had its value in the seventeenth century, but it manifestly had its dangers also. In their more serious moments the Latitudinarians were always tempted to adopt a capricious eclecticism. They recognized the good in every school of thought, and tried to appropriate the contribution of each. It was an early gibe at Burnet that in his

1. Burnet, A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of...John...Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, &c, p.15.

2. Cf. Origines Sacrae, p.617, as characteristic of many examples.

3. Patrick, A Friendly Debate, &c, To the Reader. Cf. Glanvill's account of how he converted an atheist: "I resolved not to exasperate him by hard words, or damning sentences, but calmly and without seeming emotion, discussed the business with him." A Whip For the Droll Fidler to the Atheist (1668), later included in Saducismus Triumphans, (p.455f).

4. Cf. Toland's quotation from Tillotson on the title page of Christianity Not Mysterious. Also, Collins, Discourse of Free Thinking, p.171.

sermons he blended "the opposite doctrines of Arminius and Calvin with great eloquence and applause to the no small admiration of the vulgar."¹ Glanvill proposed to harmonize the best of the thought of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and the Cambridge Platonists, but his attempt to combine specific doctrines from each led in the end to a heterogeneous assortment of ill co-ordinated elements.² This, however, was a temptation which beset them only intermittently. The Latitudinarians were not primarily philosophers, but they were always reasonable men. Their reasonableness was constantly declining into nothing more exalted than enlightened prudence. Their very preference for understatement meant that their appeal to reason often proved merely "an argument addressed to common sense."³ On occasion they could even pitch their sermons in this very modest key,⁴ which more than any other factor explains the pedestrian character of their preaching. Because the heroic note has vanished there is no deep sense of urgency in Tillotson, and his sermons now dismay the reader by their uninspired repetition of arguments directed to an unimaginative common sense.⁵

1. Cunningham, quoted in Clarke and Foxcroft, Life of Burnet, p.84.

2. Cf. F. Greenslet, Joseph Glanvill (New York, 1900), p.120.

3. C.H. Smyth, The Art of Preaching, (London, 1940), p.156.

4. Cf. Burnet, Sermon Preached in the Chapel of St. James, 23 Dec., 1688.

5. Among innumerable examples, perhaps the best is the sermon (The Wisdom of Being Religious) which stands first in Vol.I of the three volume folio edition. Cf. also The Advantages of Religion to Society, and to Particular Persons, Sermons III and IV in the same volume.

Because of the deference they paid to reason, the Latitudinarians tried to eliminate everything that might disturb its orderly exercise. They insisted on the need of a calm dispassionate outlook. "When the will and the passions have the casting voice, the case of truth is desperate."¹ Only a temper free from the disturbances of haste or prejudice, of self-interest or violent emotion can expect to further any useful cause. But even a quiet mind can be distracted if asked to deal with too much material, and the Latitudinarians constantly dwelt on the need of simplicity. They advocated a kind of clarity which, by abandoning all abstruse terms, would present truth "in simple and essential forms." Glanvill pled for a statement of belief which would consist of "few but simple and essential articles."² Tillotson "thought the less men's consciences were entangled and the less the communion of the church was clogged with disputable opinions or practices, the world would be the happier, consciences the freer, and the church the quieter."³ This attitude in part explains the immense success of the Latitudinarians. They

1. Glanvill, Essays, &c, I, p.23.

2. Glanvill, Plus Ultra, p.139: "But contenting myself with a firm assent to the few practical fundamentals of the faith, and having fixed that end of the compass, I desire to preserve my liberty as to the rest, holding the other in such posture as may be ready to draw those lines my judgment, informed by the Holy Oracles, the Articles of our Church, the apprehensions of wise antiquity, and my particular reason shall direct me to describe."

3. Burnet, Sermon Preached at the Funeral of John...Lord Archbishop, &c, p.31.

unquestionably wielded a greater influence on the ordinary Londoner than any comparable group of clergy, and they appealed to their hearers because of the directness and simplicity of their approach to religious problems. Questions that had formerly been treated with infinite intricacy and elaboration were either avoided altogether or set forth with such simplicity that ordinary men could understand them with ease. The ascendancy of Tillotson and his friends was doubtless due to a combination of many factors, but simplicity was certainly not the least important. But even this, their source of strength, could prove a weakness. The lines of a picture can be reduced to such an extent that directness is sacrificed instead of being sharpened. What the Latitudinarians gained by simplicity they often lost through vagueness.

Any account of the temper of the Latitudinarians would be seriously incomplete if it overlooked the charity and magnanimity which were the most admirable qualities of their minds. They had seen enough of the havoc wrought by religious controversy to wish to avoid its bitterness at any cost, and they represent an honest effort to differ from their opponents without acrimony. Burnet's incredible tactlessness made it difficult for his adversaries to respond, and in Glanvill the charity which he "felt toward all diversities of belief"¹ may have been partly the expression of a naturally tranquil mind, but with Tillotson it was a quality

1. Glanvill, Plus Ultra, p.140.

definitely cultivated, and maintained even in the face of the gravest provocation. "No false imputations," he wrote to Thomas Firmin, "should provoke him (i.e., Tillotson) to give ill language to persons who dissented conscientiously and for weighty reasons; which he knew well to be the case of the Socinians, for whose learning and dexterity he should always have a respect, as well as for their sincerity and exemplariness."¹ Such an attitude was likely to be misunderstood and misrepresented by opponents, and it was further subject to insidious corruption from within. Magnanimity could become a genial expansiveness and that again complacency. When Patrick was appointed Bishop of Chichester, he made a revealing entry in his journal. "I fell," he said, "into a meditation of the goodness of God, who had brought me into the world, and let me live sixty-three years in much wealth, ease and pleasure;...and made me a minister of the Gospel, and placed me in an advantageous position."² We are already on the threshold of the eighteenth century; this communing of a bishop with his prosperous soul is much closer to the genial worldliness of the ecclesiastics of the Enlightenment than it is to the intensity of Laud and his opponents or to the high-minded simplicity of the Cambridge Platonists.

This complacent comment indicates, none the less, the reason

1. Life of Thomas Firmin (1698), p.16.

2. Patrick, Autobiography, p.145.

why the Latitudinarians are significant. They made no lasting contributions to English religious literature; their works are thin, and, though popular at the time, have proved exceedingly ephemeral. Their sermons, which so profoundly affected the standards and practice of preaching, are dull in their pedestrian propriety and uninspired in their moralism. To the discussion of current religious issues they contributed a certain general approach which was characterised by intellectual candour, ecclesiastical tolerance, lenient orthodoxy, and a love of general principles. But they are important, because they both registered and accentuated an important change in religious thought. The exaltation of the early seventeenth century had been too intense to last, and its breakdown was becoming manifest even before the Restoration ushered in a new day. The danger was that reaction would sweep away the good with the bad -- religious conviction with emotional extravagance -- and lead to an age bankrupt in thought, corrupt in manners, and impervious to the influence of religion. This nearly happened, and, though the results of the Restoration period seem disastrous enough, they would have been infinitely worse had it not been for the Latitudinarians. In the reaction against enthusiasm they linked religion with the rising authority of reason; in the impatience with restraints they insisted on the obligations of a sober morality; for the extravagances of the preceeding period they substituted the simple, the lucid, the correct. They sacrificed Elizabethan splendour,

Caroline elaboration, and the grandeur of the greater Puritans. Instead they set forth to the age the religion of common sense. They explain how English religious thought made the transition from Cromwell and Baxter, Hammond and Thorndike, to the Deists on the one hand and Warburton on the other. In the case of almost every important theological issue of the time -- authority, scripture, revelation, miracle -- their work explains the developments of the succeeding age. Within their limited sphere they were effective because of the aim they pursued. They were anxious to meet the actual needs of their own day. They proposed to deal with real, not with theoretical, issues. Their ambition was "to give a statement of Christianity more satisfying to the present temper of this age"¹ than anything that had been previously forthcoming. This involved limitations; within them, they achieved a striking measure of success.

1. Stillingfleet, Origines Sacrae, Preface to the Reader.

CHAPTER FIVE. THE IMPACT OF THE NEW SCIENCE.

It is seldom that mankind inherits a new heaven and a new earth, but in the seventeenth century a new understanding of man, of the nature of his physical life and of the character of his home in space, became gradually available. Over large areas of society the old outlook remained, of course, practically unchanged, and even in circles into which the new knowledge penetrated it was often accepted with reluctance and sometimes violently opposed. Nevertheless the discoveries of the great sixteenth century pioneers -- Copernicus, Vesalius and Gesner -- were available to intelligent men, and Bacon had revealed the significance of the scientific method. His work marked the beginning of the "new philosophy" in England, even though its results were appropriated with what may seem to us astonishing hesitation. Gradually, however, the authority of Aristotle -- the symbol of the scholastic method -- was broken, and the discoveries of the later seventeenth century filled in the details of the new world picture whose outlines an earlier period had supplied. By the end of the century, a man like Bentley could assume the validity of the Copernican interpretation of the universe; he could draw largely on the discoveries of Newton; he could quote Gilbert on the circulation of the blood and Boyle on "the weight and spring of the air"; he could produce evidence supplied by the

researches of Redi, Malpighi, Swammerdam, and Leeuwenhoek.¹ Bentley was admittedly a very exceptional man, but he illustrates the extent to which the new science was supplying intelligent people with the materials for a wholly new understanding of the world. It is not surprising that those who watched the unfolding of these wonders thrilled to the prospects that seemed to open before them. "And perhaps," exclaimed Glanvill, "no age hath been more happy in liberty of enquiry than this, in which it hath pleased God to excite a very vigorous and active spirit for the advancement of real and useful learning."² Those who shared in the undertaking felt the exhilaration of collaborating with brilliant minds in a task which called forth their full powers and promised incalculable results. "I am confident," said Sprat, "there can never be shown so great a number of contemporaries in so narrow a space of the world, that loved truth so zealously; sought it so constantly; and upon whose labours mankind might so freely rely."³

This happy state was largely due to the unhappy times through which England had so recently passed. The age was fortunate in its liberty of scientific search because men had wearied of the turbulence of religious and political dissention. When the nucleus of the future Royal Society began to meet, the primary

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1. Richard Bentley, Confutation of Atheism, Eight Sermons Preached at the Honourable Robert Boyle's Lecture, in the First Year, MDCXCII (1693 --my references are to the fifth edition, Cambridge, 1724), pp.253f, 108, 25
 2. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III (Modern Improvements of Useful Knowledge), p.
 3. Sprat, History of the Royal Society, (edition of 1702), p.70.

purpose of its members was to enjoy free intercourse, "without the wild distractions of that passionate age." Such gatherings proved a training ground which provided "the next age" (i.e., the Restoration period) with "a race of young men...who were invincibly armed against the enchantments of enthusiasm."¹ The excesses of current controversy quickened the new interest in science, which in turn created an atmosphere fatal to the wranglings of the previous age, "for," remarked Sprat, "such spiritual frenzies, which did then bear rule, can never stand long before a clear and deep skill in nature."²

Thus the spirit of contention fostered the pursuit of natural science and then gradually gave way before its steady advances, but there were still other antagonists to overcome. The scholastic method was deeply entrenched both in the educational system and in the minds of the men trained in it. The scientists were not the only ones who protested against the sterile intricacies into which Aristotelianism had hardened.³ Milton's famous outburst in "The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty" expressed the disgust of an enlightened humanist, and Locke's account of his early education reflected the dissatisfaction of a philosopher of

1. Sprat, op.cit., p.53.

2. Ibid, p.54.

3. Cf. Pope's preference of Horace to Aristotle: "This I rather believe, because he did not think fit to trouble the world with entelechias, entities, quiddities, and such other abstruse, unintelligible metaphysical notions." Life of Seth Ward, p.94.

the new school.¹ But the revolt against scholasticism was a particular concern of the scientists, because the authority of the existing system cramped and hindered their discoveries at every turn. In the universities a vast system of authoritative deduction reigned supreme, and it is true, though scarcely credible, that as late as the year 1669 the University of Cambridge presented Cosimo de' Medici with a dissertation condemning the Copernican astronomy.² The prevailing system of education laid almost exclusive stress on abstract philosophizing. Pope tells us that when Seth Ward discovered certain mathematical works in the library of Sidney Sussex, there was no one in the college who could tell him what they meant.³ At Oxford, the sterility of the official teaching drove Glanvill to study natural science for himself. Formal logic, he remarks, may be a useful discipline if prevented from becoming "nice, airy, and addicted too much to general notions," but this, he adds, is precisely what usually happens. Even when science was advancing rapidly and the Royal Society was constantly recording fresh triumphs, Glanvill could complain that "progress was retarded by the dead hand of Aristotle."⁴ In the centres of

1. Cf. Fox Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, Vol.I, pp.61-2. Cf. Le Clerc: "The only philosophy then known at Oxford was the peripatetic, perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions." Eloge de M. Locke, in Bibliothèque Choisie, tom.vi, p.374.

2. Cooper, Annals of the University of Cambridge, Vol.III, p.536.

3. Pope, *op.cit.*, pp.9-10.

4. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III, p.1. Cf. also Plus Ultra, *passim*. For the retarding effect of Aristotle, see also Newton Opticks, Query 31.

higher learning, the "new philosophy" had to make headway against an entrenched system which

"suffered living men to be misled

By the vain shadows of the dead."¹

A decadent scholasticism was an abuse of authority against which the new science protested with special vehemence, but there were other forms which it was equally concerned to resist. The weight of the whole classical tradition bore heavily on any new departures in thought, and in one way or another every liberal movement of the later seventeenth century had to assert its right to differ from views hallowed by antiquity. The members of the Royal Society were charged with insolence because they preferred their own inventions before those of our ancestors." "We approach the ancients," replied Sprat, "as we behold their tombs, with veneration; but we would not therefore be confined to live in them altogether."² The protest became part of the avowed policy of the Royal Society. By resolution its members decided that in their proceedings they would not be guided by the authorities which might be quoted in defence of anything, "and therefore did not regard the credit of names, but of things."³

1. A. Cowley, Verses to the Royal Society.

2. Sprat, History of the Royal Society, p.46. Cf. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III, p.50: the members of the Royal Society, he says, respect the ancients, "but they do not think that those, however venerable sages, should have an absolute empire over the reasons of mankind."

3. Sprat, op.cit., p.105.

But dogmatism assumed many forms, and its most menacing champions were not the defenders of antiquity. Even among educated people the evidence of the new science gained ground very slowly. Early in the Restoration period, the old cosmology was set forth with superb magnificence in "Paradise Lost", but Milton was an independent thinker, ready for innovation in many fields. The view of the world which had been fashioned in the early centuries of the Christian era and reduced to perfect logical precision by the great schoolmen was still widely current. "This strange medley of fact and fable, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil"¹ represented the world view of the vast majority of the contemporaries of Newton. For many of them Copernicus might never have lived, and even fellows of the Royal Society could retain strange fragments from the older thought.² It was natural that the findings of the new science should seem to threaten the security of people who had imagined that they inhabited the centre of the universe, and equally natural that they should attack those who disturbed their peace of mind.

Seen in retrospect, the antagonism of such opponents might seem of small account, but it was no negligible factor at the time. To dissent from orthodoxy could have unpleasant consequences,³ and the apologists of the Royal Society regarded its critics as deserving at

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1. C. E. Raven, Science, Religion and the Future, (Cambridge, 1943), p.21
 2. Note the views of Henry More and Joseph Glanvill on witchcraft and necromancy.
 3. Even in 1710, Whiston lost his chair at Cambridge because of his heterodoxy.

least the civility of a reply. It was consequently of some importance that the new movement was supported by a group of clergymen whose character and position alike commanded respect. Wilkins was a man of sufficient ability to overcome, in the years following the Restoration, the handicap of being Cromwell's son-in-law, and became bishop of Chester. In Burnet's well-known words, he was one of those who, in the declining days of the Protectorate, "studied to propagate better thoughts, to take men off from being in parties, or from narrow notions, from superstitious conceits and a fierceness about opinions. He was also a great observer of natural, and a promoter of experimental philosophy, which was then a new thing and much looked after."¹ Wilkins' scientific ability may have been good though not brilliant, but he had the invaluable gift of recognizing the original work of others, and assimilating its results into his own thought. His "Treatise on Natural Religion" was important as an illustration of the kind of apologetic which commended itself to an able man aware of what was happening in the realm of science. This was a field which theologians of the older school ignored, and though there is no marked originality in Wilkins' work, it is an example of the cordial way in which the "new philosophy" and the old religion could agree together. Seth Ward, like Wilkins, was a member of the group which met at Wadham College before the Restoration,

1. Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol. I, pp.332-3.

and, like him, supported the Royal Society with his influence when he was raised to the episcopal bench. The relative prestige of bishops and scientists has altered since the end of the seventeenth century, and it is easy to forget how considerable a help the interest of these bishops was.¹

The clerics who defended most effectively the aims and efforts of the Royal Society were Joseph Glanvill and Thomas Sprat. The first need, according to Glanvill, was to remove misconceptions due to faulty information. Many of the attacks on the Royal Society sprang from prejudice;² and many simply from ignorance.³ His opponents, he said, did not know what they were talking about. "They consider not that the design is laid as low as the profound depths of nature, and reacheth as high as the uppermost storey of the universe, that it extends to all the varieties of the great world, and aims at the benefit of universal mankind."⁴ The critics, he added are mistaken when they assume that the Royal Society is a body to devise new

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1. Cf. Sprat, op.cit., p.132: "Of our churchmen, the greatest and most reverend, by their care and passion and endeavours in advancing this institution, have taken off the unjust scandal from natural knowledge, that it is an enemy to divinity. By the perpetual patronage and assistance they have afforded the Royal Society, they have confuted the false opinions of those men who believe that philosophers must needs be irreligious."
 2. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III, p.50.
 3. Ibid, p. 53.
 4. Glanvill, Plus Ultra, p.88.

theories and notions. Scientists, beyond all others, are opposed to speculative doctrines; "their first and chief employment is to report how things are de facto;....their aims are to free philosophy from the vain images and compositions of fancy, by making it palpable and bringing it down to the plain objects of the senses."¹ While some opponents objected because the Royal Society had already done too much, others taunted it with achieving nothing. "What has it done?" they asked, and Glanvill boldly retorted that it had accomplished more than "all the philosophers of the notional way since Aristotle opened his shop in Greece."²

This ancient controversy may seem to have little immediate relevance to changes in religious thought. Actually it had the closest possible relation. The parties on both sides were clerics, and they took the matter with the utmost seriousness because they recognized that ultimately these issues affected the character of their religious beliefs. Science was introducing new methods, but those previously in favour had been pressed into the service of religion. This had often worked, said Glanvill, to the detriment of faith. It had encouraged the arrogance of dogmatism; by undermining this spirit, science had delivered men's minds from "bold and peremptory conclusions, which are some of the greatest hindrances to intellectual improvements in the world."³ By

1. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III, pp.36-7.

2. Ibid, p.38.

3. Glanvill, op.cit., I, p.1.

recognizing the difficulties even in its own discipline, it had encouraged the humble and teachable disposition which can learn the ways of truth. The definition of scientific method was at once an acknowledgment of the limited field which science cultivated and a challenge to the arbitrary attitudes of the traditionalist. The "Free Philosophers" were called sceptics, because they were not willing to pore over the writings and opinions of other people; they sought truth in "the great book of nature", and in their quest proceeded warily, without too great an eagerness "to establish maxims and positive doctrines."¹

Glanvill finally turned directly to the underlying issue of the bearing of the new science on religion. Christianity, he said, is not and cannot be prejudiced by the activities of the Royal Society. Ill-informed men, quick to jump to hasty conclusions, may think otherwise, but Glanvill had no doubt that they are wrong. Some may think that the naturalist is the secret ally of the atheist; their misconception is only serious because it is not restricted to the vulgar, but influences even those who are responsible for the instruction of the people. Actually the study of nature is useful in "most of the affairs wherein religion is concerned." It cultivates an outlook fatal to all the principal enemies of belief; it overthrows atheism, sadducism, superstition, enthusiasm, and the humour of disputing. Even the charge that science undermines the authority of Scripture

1. Glanvill, op.cit., II, p.44.

is disproved. So far from encouraging men to ignore the Bible, the knowledge of God in His works disposes the mind to love Him in His Word.

What, then, should be the attitude of Christian leaders to the Royal Society and its endeavours? Some will lack the time and others the disposition to pursue such studies themselves, "yet they ought to think candidly and wish well to the endeavours of those that have; 'tis a sin and a folly either in the one or the other" (i.e., in layman or cleric) "to censure or discourage those worthy undertakings." Hence men of right understanding can only be gravely disturbed when those supposed to be religious leaders abuse natural scientists, -- "the irreligion of which injurious carriage nothing can excuse but their ignorance."¹

In Sprat's History of the Royal Society, the new movement had an apologia which contemporaries hailed as a model of what such a work should be. Many of his arguments are the same as Glanvill's, though the indebtedness was obviously on Glanvill's side. There is the same attack on dogmatism, the same protest against authority, the same complaint of the antipathy of obscurantists. He dwells on the incompatibility of science and superstition; he shows how the progress of the new philosophy has ended the tyranny of sterile controversies. He points out the various forces which in the past have hindered the

1. Glanvill, Essays, &c., IV, p.31.

advance of science, and emphasizes the baleful influence of religious controversy. "For whatever hurt or good comes by such holy speculative wars...yet certainly by this means the knowledge of nature has been very much retarded."¹ Over against the fury of these empty struggles, he places the cautious concern of the Royal Society with indisputable matters of fact. They recognize the need of ceaseless care to insure the utmost accuracy, and for that reason they will not leave facts to be determined by the individual judgment -- "nor," he adds, will they commit them "to devout and religious men alone; by all these we have been already deluded."² In investigating phenomena they "have been cautious to shun the overweening dogmatizing on causes on the one hand; and not to fall into speculative scepticism on the other."³

In describing the spirit of the new science, Sprat is in close accord with Glanvill, but he gives a much fuller account of the subject matter which the Royal Society has taken as its province. It deals, he says, with God, Man and Nature, but lest this very inclusive statement should breed misunderstanding, he immediately explains the great limitations scientists accept in connection with the first of these. "They meddle," he says, "no otherwise with divine things, than only as the power, and wisdom, and goodness

1. Sprat, op.cit., p.25f.

2. Ibid, p.73.

3. Ibid, pp.101-2.

of the Creator is displayed in the admirable order and workmanship of the creatures."¹ This statement is important. In effect Sprat declares that they propose to deal only with natural phenomena; he immediately makes clear that they will investigate them with the strictest attention to evidence and the most rigorous exclusion of a priori arguments,² but he also assumes that the evidence will declare to them the character of God. The disciplines of natural science have become in effect an alternative approach to the ultimate questions of theology.

Since this is the aim and spirit of science, Sprat finds it natural that "the greatest and most reverend" of "our churchmen" should have given the Royal Society their commendation and support.³ And well they might, for the Church of England stands only to gain from the endeavours of the Society. With others it might be different; those who put their trust in "implicit faith and enthusiasm" might fear the findings of science, but "our churchcan never be prejudiced by the light of reason, nor by the improvements of knowledge, nor by the advancement of the works of men's hands....From whence," he concludes triumphantly, "may be concluded that we cannot make war against reason, without undermining our own strength."⁴

1. Sprat, op.cit., p.82.

2. Ibid, pp.83-99.

3. Ibid, p.132.

4. Ibid, p.370.

Sprat has already proved in some detail that experimental science does not challenge the accepted forms of Christian theology. It will not destroy the doctrine of the Godhead, nor discourage the worship of God; it contains nothing that would encourage its devotees to challenge the doctrine of salvation or the teaching of the primitive church. "It may be suggested," he says, "that the sensible knowledge of things may in time abolish most of these, by insinuating into men's minds that they cannot stand before the impartiality of philosophical investigations. But this surmise has no manner of foundation."¹

It might seem that Sprat has eliminated any antagonism between religion and science, and left us with an identity of interest and a partnership of activity. But he himself at once declares that though the two are not hostile to nor in any way incompatible with each other, they must nevertheless be kept rigorously apart. Christianity should not be made dependant on any school of philosophy; "religion ought not to be the subject of disputations; it should not stand in need of any devices of reason." The substance of religion, like law, is simply promulgated, and in the last resort its deepest doctrines can only be accepted by a "plain believing." "Nor ought philosophers to regret this divorce; seeing they have almost destroyed themselves by keeping Christianity so long under their guard; by fetching religion out of the church and carrying it captive into the schools,

1. Sprat, op.cit., pp.348-355.

may have made it suffer banishment from its proper place", -- and in the process have very much corrupted the substance of their own knowledge.¹

This question of the relation of the "new philosophy" to religion was one to which the scientists of the day were constantly recurring. Boyle agree^d with Sprat. The two were in no way opposed to each other; every effort should be made to remove the appearance of antagonism, but in the last resort each fared better if they kept apart. Newton, on the contrary, wished to see the relationship kept close and intimate.² To these men and their contribution we must presently turn, but before doing so it is important to notice the way in which the rise of the new science had brought with it new problems for religion. Those who attacked the Royal Society did so not only in what they assumed to be the interests of Christianity but in defence of the "philosophy" with which their

1. Sprat, op.cit., pp.355-6.

2. Note the very illuminating comment of Professor G.N. Clark, that Newton's seemingly unrelated activities were connected by a desire to find in each area a single principle which would co-ordinate a mass of confused and complicated material. The law of gravitation did this with striking success in the world of physics; and his researches into chemistry on the one hand and into biblical prophecy and apocalyptic on the other had the same purpose but not the same result. In other words, Newton's purpose and method led him inevitably from the field of science to that of religion. Clark, Science and Social Welfare in the Age of Newton, p.84.

faith was traditionally allied. Aristotelian scholasticism, as we have seen, was the foundation of the theology, philosophy and science taught at the universities; theology might become crabbed, and science might be starved, but there need be no incompatibility between them when they both deduced their systems from the same presuppositions. To men accustomed to this outlook, the new science with its patient waiting upon fact and its repudiation of all presuppositions, seemed positively atheistical. When to this was added the impact of a new cosmology, it is scarcely surprising that fearful souls cried out that the ark was being overthrown. It was difficult to accept Glanvill's assurance that the true sceptic, so far from being a disbeliever, was one who neither derogates from faith nor despairs of science.¹

The interpreters of the new discipline played an invaluable part in defending its aims and explaining its achievements, but the important work was done by the practising scientists themselves. Their discoveries supplied the material which Sprat and Glanvill expounded, and opened the new vistas which involved so fundamental a revision of current conceptions of the universe. This entailed far-reaching modifications in the interpretation of the world, but the character of the men whose work compelled the changes made it relatively easy for contemporaries to accept them. The

1. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III, p.43.

leading scientists of the period were for the most part earnest Christians, and they continually related their discoveries to a religious interpretation of the world. The earnestness of Boyle's devotional life impressed his contemporaries as deeply as the brilliance of his scientific achievements.¹ Ray's religious sincerity was attested as convincingly by his life as by his works. For Newton, Christianity was of basic and primary importance; so far from being a conventional interest or an incidental appendage to his scientific work, it was one of the dominant concerns of his life.

It was natural that these men should maintain the most intimate relation between their scientific discoveries and their religious beliefs. In spite of Boyle's contention that theoretically they might be kept apart, he actually believed that his experimental science had a direct bearing on his Christian faith. "It appeared to those who conversed most with him in his enquiries into nature, that his main design in that, on which as he had his own eye most constantly, so he took care to put others often in mind of it, was to raise in himself and others, vaster thoughts of the greatness and glory, and of the wisdom and goodness of God."² In his will, the final article relating to the Royal

1. Cf. Burnet, Discourse on the late Hon. Mr. Boyle: "I might here challenge the whole tribe of Libertines to come and view the usefulness, as well as the excellence of the Christian religion, in a life that was entirely dedicated to it, and see what they can object." Boyle proved, adds Burnet, "to how vast a sublimity the Christian religion can raise a mind, that does both thoroughly believe it, and is entirely governed by it."

2. Burnet, op.cit., p.10. Cf. also, E.A. Burt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science, p.188.

Society wishes its members "also a happy success in their laudable attempts to discover the true nature of the works of God, and praying, that they ^{and} all other searchers into physical truths may cordially refer their attainments to the glory of the great author of nature and to the comfort of mankind."¹ In his first letter to Bentley, Newton declared that "when I wrote my treatise about our system, I had an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men, for the belief of a Deity."² John Ray regarded "the objects of his study, the order of the universe, the life of plants and animals, the structure and functioning of nature, as the manifestation of the mind of God." The joy and wonder which accompanied his work were "essentially religious" in character, and his discoveries bore for him "a profound religious and indeed Christian significance."³

Men so deeply persuaded of the importance of religion could not limit their attention to remarks scattered incidentally throughout their scientific works. Both Boyle and Newton wrote extensively on theological matters. In Newton's case, his works on biblical subjects were inspired by an intellectual rather than a devotional interest, and as a result were directly related to the remainder of his work.⁴ Their importance, however, is now

1. Quoted in Richard Boulton's Life of the Hon. Robert Boyle (1725), p.22.

2. Newton, Opera, Vol. IV, p.429.

3. C. E. Raven, John Ray, Naturalist (Cambridge, 1943), p.455.

4. G.N. Clark, Science and Social Welfare in the Age of Newton, p.83.

strictly limited. They disclose a considerable amount of erudition; they show Newton as an ingenious critic of texts; and at certain significant points they indicate the direction in which his mind was moving. They suggest that Newton was an Arian in his theological sympathies, and this is confirmed by his unpublished writings.¹ In this respect he reflected a trend noticeable among certain of his contemporaries; if, they said, they could eliminate from Christianity the doctrine of the Trinity, it would be easier for them to reconcile theology and science. Newton's work on "Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture" attacked the authenticity of two texts often quoted in defence of this article of belief, but his reluctance to publish this and other works² of clearly unitarian character show that he had no desire to be a leader in any matter so certain to issue in bitter controversy.

Boyle's religious works are more extensive in their scope and less controversial in their implications. Some of them are devotional in character;³ some are scriptural,⁴ and some set forth his views of

1. Cf. L.T. More, Isaac Newton, p.640. Cf. also H. McLachlan, The Religious Opinions of Milton, Locke, and Newton (Manchester, 1941), p.172. The latter work, whose intention is evidently limited to a desire to prove that Milton, Locke and Newton were Unitarians, restricts itself in the case of Newton to his Biblical writings, and ignores the important implications of the religious comments contained in the Principia, the Opticks, &c.

2. Cf. Queries Regarding the Word Homousios; Paradoxical Questions Concerning the Morals and Actions of Athanasius and His Followers (published by Brewster, Vol.II, p.342f).

3. E.g., Occasional Meditations; Of the Veneration Due to God.

4. E.g., Of the Style of Scripture.

the relation of reason¹ and science² on the one hand and religion on the other. They are the expression of a devout and humble mind, and for our purposes most of them are only important as explaining the immense veneration with which contemporary Christians regarded Boyle.

The leaders of English science were sincere believers, and they were convinced that their faith was fortified by their discoveries. Scattered throughout their works are abundant indications of the line of reasoning they pursued. Certain fundamental facts point, they said, to the existence of God. His works in particular bear constant witness to His wisdom and creative power. Human reason and intelligence are impossible to explain if there be no creative Reason behind them. "I make great doubt," said Boyle, "whether there be not some phenomena in nature which the atomists cannot satisfactorily explain by any figuration, motion or connection of material particles whatsoever; for some faculties and operations of the reasonable soul in man are of so peculiar and transcendent a kind, that as I have not yet seen them solidly explicated by corporeal principles, so I expect not to see them in haste made out by such."³

Even greater stress was laid on the significance of order and beauty in the universe at large. This, indeed, was the argument

1. E.g., The Reconcilableness of Reason and Religion.

2. Cf. The Christian Virtuoso; The Excellence of Theology, Setting Forth the Pre-eminence of Divinity Over Science.

3. Boyle, Works, Vol. II, p.47f.

to which the scientists most frequently revert. The regularity of nature's functioning was unintelligible save in terms of a creative purpose to which phenomena respond. Such beauty as surrounds us was manifestly meant to correspond to the design of some wise providence which gave both the gift and the power to receive it. They were continually encountering examples of adaptation. Newton found them in the movements of the heavenly bodies, Ray in the life of plants and animals, but to both alike they pointed to the creative power of God. "That the consideration of the vastness, beauty and regular motions of the heavenly bodies; the excellent structure of animals and plants; besides a multitude of other phenomena of nature and the subserving of most of these to men; may justly induce him as a rational creature to conclude that this vast, beautiful, orderly, and (in a word) many ways admirable system of things, that we call the world, was framed by an author supremely powerful, wise and good, can scarce be denied by an intelligent and unprejudiced considerer."¹ Newton, with his greater mastery of style, presented essentially the same argument. "The main business of natural philosophy," he said, "is to argue from phenomena without feigning hypostases, and to deduce causes from effects, till we come to the very first cause, which certainly is not mechanical; and not only to unfold the

1. Boyle, Works, Vol. V, p.515f.

mechanism of the world, but chiefly to resolve these and such like questions. What is there in places almost empty of matter, and from whence is it that sun and planets gravitate toward one another without dense matter between them? Whence is it that nature does nothing in vain; and whence arises all that order and beauty which we see in the world? To what end are comets, and whence is it that planets move all one and the same way in orbs concentric, while comets move all manner of ways, in orbs very eccentric? and what hinders the fixed stars from falling upon one another? How came the bodies of animals to be contrived with so much art, and for what ends were their several parts? Was the eye contrived without skill in optics, or the ear without knowledge of sounds? How do the motions of the body follow from the will, and whence is the instinct in animals? Is not the sensory of animals that place to which sensitive substance is present, and into which the sensible species of things are carried through the nerves and brain, that there they may be perceived by their immediate presence to that substance? And these things being rightly despatched, does it not appear from phenomena that there is a being incorporeal, living, intelligent, ~~omni~~present, who in infinite space, as it were in his sensory, sees the things themselves intimately, and thoroughly perceives them; and comprehends them wholly by their immediate presence to himself?"¹

1. Newton, Opticks, p.344f.

The fact of God and the reality of His creative power are the great religious affirmations which the scientists deduced from their discoveries. This was perhaps natural; the evidence of the new philosophy had been used for their own purposes by men whom Boyle attacked as "atheists and prophaners." The contemporary assault on religion had come from those who saw in natural law a substitute for a creative and sustaining power. It consequently seemed a circumstance of the utmost importance that scientists wielding the authority of Boyle and Newton declared that their researches gave no ground of confidence to the atheist. Even gravity -- so soon to acquire an almost magical appeal -- was not regarded by Newton as possessed inherently by matter. It was, he said, dependent upon the power of God, but in any case, whether it was essential to bodies or not, a divine creation was implied.¹

The issue at stake, then, was the reality of God; having established that a wise creator was responsible for fashioning the earth, Boyle and Newton interpreted His character in terms which traditional theology had made familiar. But it was **with** neither the nature of God nor the manner of His working that subsequent developments were chiefly concerned. The continuing functions which Boyle and Newton assigned to God were considerably less dramatic than the creative activity which framed the universe. Boyle insisted that God had not abandoned the world, and Newton,

1. Cf. E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science, p.287.

by his emphasis on the power and dominion of God,¹ made it necessary to find some adequate activity for God to discharge.² Boyle claimed that God, having set the universe in motion, constantly kept it from disintegrating. Newton assigned to God two specific functions; He prevented the fixed stars from collapsing in the middle of space, and He kept the mechanism of the world in perfect working order. It was this latter suggestion, as Professor Burt has shown, that finally brought Newtonian metaphysics into disrepute. There was a touch of the absurd in seriously assigning to God, as one of His major tasks, the responsibility of keeping His universe in good repair. It was demonstrated, step by step, that the exceptional tasks reserved by Newton as the sphere of divine operation, were actually not irregular, but the province of fixed law. The ultimate consequences of the Newtonian system lie, however, far beyond the boundaries of our period, and it is only necessary to indicate the points which proved historically significant.

In the early eighteenth century, complacency was the persistent temptation of educated Englishmen. "All the dearest ambitions of men and of Britons had been realized; the constitution had been established and 'freedom' secured; Homer and Vergil had been equalled if not outdone, and the law which preserves the stars from wrong had been made manifest, and the true workings of the

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1. "The supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect; but a being, however perfect, without dominion cannot be said to be Lord God..." Principia, II, 310.
 2. This in spite of the occasional suggestion that the reign of law can now control the world.

mind had been revealed. All these things had been done not only by Englishmen but by Christians."¹ But the "law which preserves the stars from wrong" had not been set forth in terms intelligible to the ordinary reader.² If the Newtonian conception of the universe became within a generation a part of the outlook of educated men, it was not because they had read the Principia. The findings of the new physics had to be interpreted for the benefit of the ordinary person; as regards the religious significance of Newton's discoveries, one of the earliest as well as one of the most important contributions was Richard Bentley's Confutation of Atheism.

In his will, Boyle had provided for the institution of an annual series of eight sermons, "for proving the Christian religion against notorious infidels," and Richard Bentley, a young scholar whose fame was rapidly increasing, was the first lecturer appointed by the trustees. Bentley's attack on the atheists was two-fold -- negatively he demonstrated the indefensible position of those "engaged in that labyrinth of nonsense and folly"³; positively he proved the necessity of a belief in God. His whole method is significant. He made no appeal to Scripture; its authority was not admitted by his opponents and he did not even postulate that it must be included as part of the relevant material.

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1. B. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p.264.
 2. When Bentley began his study of Newton, Craig sent him a most formidable and discouraging list of books as prolegomena to the Principia. Cf. Jebb, Bentley, p.26.
 3. Bentley, Confutation of Atheism, p.4.

"But however there are other books extant which they must needs allow of as proper evidence: even the mighty volumes of visible nature, and the everlasting tables of right reason, wherein if they do not wilfully shut their eyes they may read their own folly written by the finger of God in a much plainer and more terrible sentence, than Belshazzar's was by the hand upon the wall."¹ The emphasis on reason is revealing, and in claiming that religion imposes "nothing repugnant to man's faculties or incredible to his reason"², Bentley was testifying, at the end of our period, to a belief which had steadily gained ground throughout a generation.

Bentley's detailed refutation of atheism³ is now chiefly interesting as a scintillating display of controversial skill. It is in stating his own case that he expounded, in so illuminating a way, the bearing of the new science on religious thought. His main points were those which Boyle and Newton had already advanced. The proof of God's existence was drawn, in the first place, from the nature of man's reason and intelligence⁴; in the second, from the evidence of order, beauty and purpose in the world.⁵ Of the two arguments, Bentley manifestly regarded the

1. Bentley, op.cit., pp.2-3.

2. Ibid, p.16.

3. Atheism, it should be noted, is regarded as the legacy of Hobbes, Ibid, p.3.

4. Sermon II.

5. Sermons III-VIII.

second as the more important. Certainly he dealt with it with much more verve and at far greater length. He examined first the evidence furnished by the human organism, and proved "that the organical structure of human bodies, whereby they are fitted to live and move and be vitally informed by the soul is unquestionably the workmanship of a most wise and powerful and beneficent maker."¹ With infinite ingenuity he varied the argument from design. "Nay, even the very nails of our fingers are an infallible token of design and contrivance....It is manifest therefore that there was a contrivance and foresight of the usefulness of nails antecedent to their formation."²

In the last three sermons (VI, VII, VIII), Bentley turned to the evidence supplied by "the origin and frame of the world." His indebtedness to Newton was frankly acknowledged. In order to prove "with the greater clarity and conviction" that atoms could never have fashioned themselves "into this present frame of things," he proposed to give a brief account of "the most principal and systematical phenomena that occur in the world now that it is formed."³ He began with gravitation, "lately demonstrated and put beyond controversy by that very excellent and divine theorist, Mr. Isaac Newton, to whose most admirable

1. Bentley, op.cit., p.91. Of particular interest is his detailed attack, re-inforced by the recent discoveries of Redi, Malpighi, &c, on the suggestion that life could spontaneously emerge out of inert matter.

2. Ibid, p. 184.

3. Ibid, p. 251.

sagacity and industry we shall frequently be obliged in this and the following discourse."¹ His next sentence made clear the rôle Bentley had accepted for himself. "I will not entertain this auditory," he said, "with an account of the demonstration; but, referring the curious to the book itself for full satisfaction, I shall now proceed and build upon it as a truth solidly established, that all bodies....&c."² Theological learning was already beginning to take the findings of the new science for granted; its next task was to draw from them the proper deductions.

Throughout the remainder of this remarkable work, Bentley was drawing out, with infinite ingenuity and a bewildering wealth of material, the religious significance of Newtonian physics. It is not necessary to follow the argument in detail; in spite of its intricacies, the main purpose is clear enough. Bentley was proving to his contemporaries that the latest discoveries of science, even when minutely examined, gave no confidence to the enemies of religion. On the contrary, they confirmed the central affirmations of belief -- that God exists, and that He created the universe and all the living things our world contains.

The end of the seventeenth century was an age of transition. The men who made the great discoveries in science might be earnest Christians, but the belief of many of their contemporaries

1. Bentley, op.cit., p.253.

2. Ibid, p.253.

was unsettled none the less. The faith which Boyle restated was seventeenth century orthodoxy, shorn only of its antiquated cosmology, but he was alarmed at the signs of revolt against that faith. He founded his lectureship to confute atheists, and Sprat noted that the age was marked by all the signs of religious decline.¹ In such an age, what was the effect of science on religious thought?

In the first place, it accentuated the tendency to magnify the rôle of reason in religion. The trend in this direction was perhaps the most striking single feature of later seventeenth century thought, and it was undoubtedly reinforced by the rise of natural science. It required no great prescience on Sprat's part to recognize that any triumphs won in his life-time would not go to "enthusiasm". It was equally obvious to him that science was strengthening the emphasis on reason. This, he hoped, would lead to a restatement of religion to which his generation would respond.² The natural counterpart to the increasing rationalism was an attack on authority. This, in turn, subtly influenced the character of religious thought. The traditional forms were

1. Sprat, History of the Royal Society, p.376: "The generality of Christendom is well-nigh arrived at that fatal condition which did immediately preceed the destruction of the religion of the ancient world: when the face of religion in their public assemblies was quite different from that apprehension men had of it in private. In public they observed its rules with much solemnity, but in private regarded it not at all."

2. Ibid, p.375.

maintained, but there was less emphasis on dogma.¹ Some beliefs (though not always the ones we might expect) were called in question; others were reinterpreted in a broader and more flexible sense. The rigid, detailed systems of theology so popular earlier in the century were passing rapidly into disrepute.

The scientists did not challenge the prevailing statements of belief; indeed, for the most part they were scrupulously loyal to them. Miracles, though certain ultimately to be challenged in an age obsessed with natural law, were still treated with deference and care.² Scripture, likewise, retained its virtually unchallenged authority.³ Yet, in the case of both these subjects,

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1. Cf. G.N. Clark, The Seventeenth Century, p.518. Note also Sprat's comment: "In a gross and sensual age, the deepest mysteries of our religion may be proper, to purify the stupidity of men's spirits; but there must be an applicable of quite different and more sensible prescriptions, in a subtle, refined, and enthusiastical time."
 2. Boyle carefully left room for special providences, but it is notable that he stressed the importance of the regular rather than of the unusual. It became increasingly customary, however, to extend the rule of law to its utmost limits, and then allow, for courtesy's sake, exceptions to cover scriptural miracles (cf. Bentley's Confutation, p.150). But God had performed these spectacular actions only "in dark and ignorant ages", and there were weighty reasons why no "prodigies" should astonish the intelligent period in which the Royal Society had birth. Newton, it should be noted, believed that if miracles were better understood, many of them would prove to be examples of the working of laws concerning which we are now ignorant (cf. Portsmouth Papers, quoted by L. T. More, Isaac Newton, p.623).
 3. Boyle believed that the study of the Bible was both more important and more rewarding than the study of nature. Newton gave at least as much time to pondering the problems of Biblical interpretation as to examining the structure of the physical world (cf. More, op. cit., p.637; also J.W.N. Sullivan's comment, that if Newton

(this note is continued on the next page).

the scientists introduced slight modifications, which, though apparently leaving the substance of belief unchanged, opened the door to a demand for serious changes. The results only became apparent later -- in the Deistic controversy, for instance -- but the ferment was already at work.

In ways they scarcely understood, the seventeenth century scientists had helped to change the general outlook in philosophy and religion.¹ They had shaken the old system of education and modified the whole conception of the universe. But what the results of these things would be they did not see. They had at their disposal material which might reasonably have led to important changes, but actually did not. The true explanation of fossils was gaining ground, but it was only used in religious debate to demonstrate the reliability of the story of the flood. The old beliefs in instantaneous acts of creation and in the accepted chronology of the world were undisturbed. The representatives of the new outlook claimed that it was a perversion of Scripture to use it to establish matters (such as astronomy) with which it was not primarily concerned, but they still quoted the folklore of Genesis as a literal and authoritative account of the early history

(continued from the previous page) neglected the subjects where his genius lay, it was because he regarded them as relatively less important, Isaac Newton, p.13). But Newton and Sprat both stated decisively that while the prestige of Scripture stood firm, this gave no special authority to private interpretations of the Bible; we do not value it less because we refuse to accept the tyranny of other people's views about it.

1. Cf. L. Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Trinity (New York, 1944), pp.123-4.

of human life upon the earth.¹

In one respect, science introduced a change of profound importance in accepted methods of thought, and this had significant results in theology. The "new philosophy" refused to argue from presuppositions, however plausible or venerable they might be. This had been the unchallenged practice of the previous age; it explained the poverty of the earlier science, which "had never been able to do any great good toward the enlargement of knowledge, because it relied on general terms."² The new science declared that there can be no profitable search for truth which does not begin with evidence and remain scrupulously loyal to it. "The philosophy that must signify either for light or use must not be the work of the mind turned in upon itself, and conversing only with its own ideas; but it must be raised from the observations and applications of sense, and take its account from things as they are in the sensible world."³ In no area had discussion become so remote and abstract as in theology. This had already brought it into disrepute; now, under the combined influence of Locke⁴ and Newton, the old method was hopelessly discredited. But it did not follow that theology began to treat in any fruitful way the material provided by religious experience.

1. Bentley, op.cit., p.93.

2. Sprat, op.cit., p.16.

3. Glanvill, Essays, &c, III, p.23.

4. Cf. N. Kemp Smith, John Locke, p.17.

The approach might seem obvious, but the proprieties of the eighteenth century were already beginning to paralyse the religious imagination. It is one of the tragedies of English theology that a new method replaced the old at a time when the insight necessary for its constructive use was lacking.

Two further changes, significant though somewhat indirect, remain to be noted. The first is the way in which the scientist found in his work a sense of what can only be described as religious vocation. Science summoned its followers to combat ignorance and superstition -- as true a crusade, said Sprat, as any war upon the Turks.¹ In this task they felt a community of interest and purpose which transcended all customary barriers -- "of country, of interest, or profession of religion" -- and in which each helped the other as he was able. In natural science and its pursuits, many minds were discovering a new means of expressing a zeal which had hitherto found an outlet through more conventional religious channels.

This spirit, however, extended far beyond the circle of the great discoverers. The new science taught ordinary people the joys of observing nature. It established as a national characteristic an awareness of and devotion to the study of the manifold forms of life. This was a complete break with the past; hitherto men had been apt to regard nature with fear and apprehension. The

1. Sprat, op.cit., p.57.

change might not in any immediate or obvious way affect the churches, but its religious consequences were of the utmost importance. As the seventeenth century closed, Englishmen were beginning to realise that "the treasures of nature are inexhaustible"¹, and the discovery contributed an element of permanent and incalculable value to English life.

1. John Ray, The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation, p.126.

CHAPTER SIX. THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN LOCKE.

The importance of some thinkers is even greater than the intrinsic value of what they have to say. Locke epitomised the outlook of his own age, and anticipated the thought of the succeeding period. To emphasise the astonishing scope of Locke's influence in no way suggests a disposition to depreciate the inherent value of his philosophy. Part of the importance of his work lies in the immense prestige which it acquired; indeed, for over a hundred years, his Essay Concerning Human Understanding determined the course of European thought.¹ The range of Locke's influence was vastly wider than the circle usually affected by the writings of philosophers. He created a new mentality among intelligent people; he offered a satisfying interpretation of the workings of the human mind, and provided a framework within which the ordinary person's thinking could be done. While Newton was establishing the prevalent conception of the physical universe, Locke was fashioning that picture of the mental world which became a commonplace in the eighteenth century. This was partly due to the comparative ease with which the average reader could follow the argument of the Essay, but it was also the result of the indirect but all-pervasive

1. Cf. A.S. Pringle-Pattison, preface to Locke's Essay (Oxford, 1924), p.xiv. Professor N. Kemp Smith claims that on the appearance of Locke's Essay, he "became the dominant philosophical influence throughout Europe", and retained that position throughout virtually the whole of the eighteenth century; cf. John Locke (Manchester, 1933), p.8; also, pp.12 & 13.

influence which Locke exerted.

As Locke's authority increased, the bearing of his work on religious thought became steadily more apparent. Locke, of course, had sometimes dealt with specifically religious subjects, but it was not this fact which determined the extent of his influence on theology. His incidental comments on religion were often more important than his explicitly theological work, and the spirit in which he approached Christianity was more significant than what he actually said about it. Locke summed up an attitude to religious issues which was steadily gaining ground as the seventeenth century ended, and his immense influence made it almost universal in the early years of the eighteenth century.

But even in his philosophical work religion occupied an important place. The inevitable conclusion toward which the Essay steadily moves is the certainty of God's existence. We are intuitively aware that we ourselves exist; if we concede that fact -- and no reasonable man, said Locke, can deny it -- we reach by demonstration the assurance that there is a God. In this lies the distinctive quality of religious conviction. "But though this be the most obvious truth that reason discovers, and though its evidence be (if I mistake not) equal to mathematical certainty; yet it requires thought and attention; and the mind must apply itself to a regular deduction of it from some part of our intuitive knowledge, or else we shall be as uncertain and ignorant of this as of other propositions which

are in themselves capable of clear demonstration."¹ Locke thus disposed at a single stroke of the belief in innate ideas. Throughout the seventeenth century, many of the foremost religious writers had clung to the conviction that God had imprinted on the mind of man certain indelible truths, and that of these ideas the assurance of His own existence was at once the clearest and the most important. It was by quite a different approach that Locke arrived at a belief in God. Man starts with himself -- he "knows that he himself is" -- but he also knows that "nothing can produce a being, therefore something eternal."² Thereafter it was relatively simple for Locke to show that such an eternal being must be most powerful, most knowing, existing from eternity -- "and therefore God." "Thus from the consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our own constitutions, our reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth, that there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being, which whether any one will please to call God, it matters not. The thing is evident; and from this idea duly considered, will easily be deduced all those other attributes which we ought to ascribe to this eternal Being."³

Locke was uncompromising in asserting the inescapable character of belief in God. "It is plain to me," he said, "we

1. Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, IV, 10, 1.

2. Ibid, IV, 10, 3.

3. Ibid, IV, 10, 6.

have a more certain knowledge of the existence of a God, than of anything our senses have not immediately discovered to us. Nay, I presume I may say that we more certainly know that there is a God, than that there is anything else without us."¹ This was reassuring doctrine for the closing years of the seventeenth century, but the character of Locke's argument admirably illustrates the trend of thought in this period. The significance of Locke's proof of the existence of God does not lie in the fact that he exalted the part reason plays in the search for truth. The emphasis on reason had been growing steadily stronger ever since the Restoration, and was continued -- fortified, of course, by Locke -- throughout most of the subsequent century. Locke supplied a detailed and (as it seemed) a scientific account of what people had felt must be the true origin of our idea of God. He did more than affirm the importance of reason in religion; he explained how it worked, and made it seem both necessary and inevitable. He laid bare the workings of the mind, with the result that those who followed him could confidently affirm as fact what had previously been put forward as hypothesis. It is difficult for us now to recapture any adequate awareness of the tremendous effect Locke's argument produced. The dark mysteries of the human mind had seemingly been explored and its secret places laid open to the scrutiny of men. The cool

1. Locke, op.cit., IV, 10, 1.

dispassionate ease of Locke's work seemed to symbolize the completeness of this victory. If we overlook this fact, we can hardly hope to understand the confident assurance of the early eighteenth century. Intelligent men were not perplexed by insoluble difficulties or overwhelmed by mysteries beyond their grasp. The secrets of the heavens had been disclosed by Newton, those of the human mind by Locke. In both regions, the principle which resolved chaos into order was the same. The evidence of reason ran through all things. Its unifying power could no longer be treated as an intuition. It had been conclusively proved, and the demonstration had had an immediate bearing on theology. Locke reaffirmed the rôle of reason in religion, but at the same time he lifted it to a new plane of confident authority. He appropriated a widely diffused but ill-defined conviction, and gave it a clear and persuasive form. The results rapidly became apparent. The tone of the Deistic controversy already shows the effect of Locke's work, but this is only one example among many. Everywhere the authority of reason went unquestioned. However much antagonists might differ, they agreed in this, -- that their arguments would stand or fall as they were able to abide the test of reason. Rationalism became "a habit of thought ruling all minds,"¹ and as time went on it exercised

1. Mark Pattison, Essays, Vol.II, p.45. As Pattison pointed out, rationalism as applied to this period bears no suggestion that the truths of religion were denied. It rather suggests a certain spirit in which these truths were approached.

a more and more constricting influence on religious thought. The area which men were willing to explore steadily diminished. "The title of Locke's treatise, The Reasonableness of Christianity, may be said to have been the solitary thesis of Christian theology in England for the greater part of a century."¹

From this it naturally followed that Locke's authority confirmed another tendency already clearly manifest in English religious thought. All the intellectual forces of the period combined to discredit reliance on authority, and one by one the more progressive theologians of the Restoration era had emphasised the need for greater independence of thought. In Locke the revolt against tradition found its most effective spokesman. Untold mischief, he claimed, had resulted from a dull acquiescence in formulations uncritically transmitted from one generation to the next. "So much as we ourselves consider and comprehend of truth and reason, so much we possess of real and true knowledge."

It is clear, in fact, that Locke's doctrine of God was related closely and at many points to the main currents of thought in his age. At times he confirmed and amplified arguments which had been commonly accepted, but he was quite prepared to dissent from positions which were invested with considerable prestige. Descartes had recently restated the ontological argument for the existence of God. The effect on contemporary opinion had been

1. Mark Pattison, op.cit., Vol.II, p.46.

tremendous, but ^{Locke} refrained from using it, and ultimately repudiated it altogether. He referred to it in the Essay, but declined to discuss it in detail. It might or might not establish what it claimed to prove, but Locke thought it was questionable wisdom to insist so largely on one argument as to ignore all others.¹ Subsequently, however, he explicitly rejected the ontological argument,² and Professor Gibson has pointed out that in a paper dated 1696 (and published by Lord King), Locke claimed that it could not carry conviction, because it involved an inference from idea to real existence.³ "Real existence," said Locke, "can be proved only by real existence; and, therefore, the real existence of a God can only be proved by the real existence of other things."

But the fact that Locke differed from Descartes at this point is perhaps chiefly important because it indicates why Locke acquired so vast an influence. By his own confession, he was deeply indebted to Descartes, but his innate independence of mind, strengthened possibly by his scientific studies, enabled him to use Descartes' material with considerable freedom. He was able to borrow or reject with discrimination. He adopted Descartes' "doctrine of clear and distinct ideas and his rationalist approach to all problems," but these, especially when

1. Locke, op.cit., IV, 10, 7.

2. Locke, First Letter to Stillingfleet, Works, Vol. IV, pp.53-6.

3. J. Gibson, Locke's Theory of Knowledge, &c, (Cambridge, 1917), p.169.

supplemented by a proper recognition of the part played by experience, were precisely the concepts most likely to appeal to popular understanding.¹

At the end of the seventeenth century, the prestige of mathematics stood high. The law of gravitation supplied the norm by which all phases of the search for truth were judged. Newton had shown that the vast complexity of the universe was governed to its remotest confines by one uniform mathematical order, and no area of thought could escape the influence of such a discovery. Against this background, Locke's contribution to religious thought finds its proper place. He insisted that the material of thought is provided by the five senses, and that thought itself is a process conducted in a spirit of detachment which refuses to be deflected by enthusiasm. If you begin with "self-evident facts and self-evident propositions, and proceed by mathematically correct deductions," is there any reason why your search for truth should yield in the religious sphere results less dependable than in the realm of physical science? Locke thought not. It is "as clear as demonstration can make it," he said, "that there must be an eternal Being."² His claim that the evidence for the existence of God is "equal to mathematical certainty"³ is significant;

1. Cf. N. Kemp Smith, *op.cit.*, p.15.

2. Locke, *op.cit.*, IV, 10, 13.

3. *Ibid*, IV, 10, 1.

this, Locke believed, was the most cogent argument you could advance to prove your point. But in the process, Locke lost as much as he gained. He offered the kind of God that mathematical procedures can establish. Campbell Fraser pointed out that the expression Locke habitually used -- "a God" -- is significant. The notably impersonal character of his "eternal Being" is partly the result of the method by which he proved that God exists. Locke's God is the final term in a demonstration, and has the quality which such an approach might be expected to produce. He is proved by an appeal to a restricted kind of evidence. The processes of logical demonstration outweigh the disclosures of man's total experience. The argument left out of account many aspects of life which religion ignores to its serious impoverishment. This is the great weakness of Locke's treatment of the central concept of belief, and he transmitted it, with all the weight of his authority behind it, to the eighteenth century.

The seventeenth century ends, consequently, with a reaffirmation of the being of God, but its character epitomises the change which had taken place in English religious thought. With cool, dispassionate clarity, God was set forth as a necessary postulate, wholly reasonable and satisfying to the mind, and upheld by evidence conforming to the standards of the intellectual discipline which then commanded unquestioning assent. The Puritans of the Interregnum had believed in God with no less assurance than Locke himself, but

the intellectual framework of their faith was completely different. The evidence supplied by religious experience held a place of paramount importance, and the prominence of the "pilgrim motif"¹ brought God and his purposes into the closest possible relation to the moral problems of mankind. The intensity of the Puritans' preoccupation with God would have made Locke's mathematical approach seem ridiculously irrelevant. Their God might be grim; at times He might even seem capricious, but there was no escape from the paramount demands with which He confronted His believers. The Puritans believed in God not so much because they had proved that He was plausible as because they felt that His sovereign purposes had laid hold upon their life and thought. By the end of the century, men were prepared to accept with assurance the reality of God, but only after a dispassionate assessment of the evidence. They declared themselves in favour of an "eternal Being", but He lacked the majesty and splendour of the God the Puritans had worshipped. "All passion spent" might stand as the epitaph of seventeenth century theology, and Locke, more than any other man, was responsible for giving religious thought the self-possessed assurance which it carried into the Age of Reason.

Locke was eager both to prove the existence of God and to establish the primary place of reason in religion. But if you exalted reason, you had to come to terms with revelation. This

1. Cf. W. Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, (New York, 1938), pp. 148f, 190.

was clearly shown by the character of religious thought in the generation following the Restoration. The extravagant terms in which some of the sectaries had defined revelation had made it thoroughly suspect. To counteract the claims of those who "believe without foundation that their impulses come from God"¹, reason had been consistently pressed into service. The reality of revelation was not questioned, but even when its abuses had been checked, there remained the difficult question of the relation between what God discloses and what man discovers. Locke dealt with this question more explicitly than most of his predecessors, and the influence of his treatment of the subject is clearly seen in later thought.

Locke's contribution lay in his attempt to define with greater care than had hitherto been done the interdependence of these two crucial terms. "Reason," he said, "is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light, and Fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties. Revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. So that he that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the light of both; and does much-what

1. The phrase is Leibnitz' (quoted by Pringle-Pattison, op.cit., p.360, n.1). Compare Butler's treatment of enthusiasm, Analogy, II, VII, 13.

the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope."¹ Locke, then, explicitly stated that Christianity was a religion of both reason and revelation; the importance of his contribution is his clear definition of the way in which revelation is received by man. Though he conceded that "the bare testimony of revelation is the highest certainty,"² he claimed that we can only judge whether a truth has really been disclosed by God if we exercise our reason. The material with which revelation deals must be "our simple ideas", and for these "we must wholly depend on our reason."³ Moreover, "revelation cannot be admitted against the clear evidence of reason," and therefore no proposition can be received for divine revelation if it be contradictory to our clear intuitive knowledge."⁴ But there are some matters on which we have no "clear and distinct knowledge"; here our unaided faculties cannot bring us to the truth. Only revelation can help us, and whatever is disclosed to us in these regions is "the proper matter of faith."⁵ But here the delicate equipoise of Locke's distinctive position becomes apparent. Where God has been pleased to disclose the truth, such revelation "must

1. Locke, op.cit., IV, 19, 4.

2. Ibid, IV, 16, 14.

3. Ibid, IV, 18, 3.

4. Ibid, IV, 18, 5.

5. Ibid, IV, 18, 7.

carry it against the probable conjectures of reason," but "it still belongs to reason to judge the truth of its being a revelation, and of the signification of the words wherein it is delivered."¹ As Locke stated it in an alternative form, "whatever God hath revealed is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it.... but whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge."²

This is the only way, Locke said, in which the extravagances of credulity can be curtailed; without a definition of this kind, reason will wholly forfeit its foothold in religion. But the even balance which Locke so adroitly maintained was easily disturbed. He himself set forth his argument as a corrective to the irrationality of "enthusiasm", but those who followed him used it to question affirmations which Locke was not in the least disposed to challenge. Moreover, the intellectual atmosphere of the period tended to fix men's attention on one half of his argument in such a way as to obscure the other. The position which Locke had stated was briefly this -- God's existence can be proved by reason; this truth is supplemented by revelation; but revelation itself is subject to the scrutiny of reason. Given the mental outlook of the age, it was natural that the part played by reason should gradually eclipse the place given to revelation. In the Deists we see this process already at work; to pursue the matter

1. Locke, op.cit, Iv, 18, 8.

2. Ibid, IV, 18, 10.

further would carry us into the history of eighteenth century thought.

Locke himself, however, was partly responsible for obscuring the rôle which he assigned to revelation. In the Essay he was dealing with religion in general terms, but in The Reasonableness of Christianity he expounded in detail his conception of what revelation actually involved. The title of this work is in itself sufficient to suggest that those who magnified the rational element in Locke's attitude to religion received ample encouragement from Locke himself. The appeal throughout is to the understanding of sensible men.¹ Locke cites his authorities -- his quotations from Scripture are exhaustively detailed -- but his use of them admirably illustrates his approach to religious questions. He went to the Bible, he tells us, because the prevailing "systems of divinity" seemed unsatisfying and inconsistent,² and he looked for a statement of belief which would be free from all intricacy and confusion. In other words, he was approaching the whole question of revealed religion in the spirit which the increasing rationalism of the later seventeenth century dictated. He wanted a form of belief which would be clear, direct, and simple.

The emphasis on simplicity is important. It is characteristic of Locke's treatment both of small details and of large principles.

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1. Cf. Oman's comment: "God is there (in The Reasonableness of Christianity) shown to have acted in a sensible, business-like manner, and Christ to be the incarnation of Divine commonsense." The Problem of Faith and Freedom, p.105.
 2. Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, Preface. (All references are to the first edition, 1695).

Scripture, he said, is not a collection of abstruse writings; it says exactly what on the surface it appears to say, and is "therefore generally to be understood in the plain, direct meaning of the words and phrases."¹ When the sacred writers speak of death, they mean death -- nothing more or less.² This, according to Locke, is perfectly natural; they were writing "for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind." But the simplicity is as much a matter of substance as of form. When Locke "betook himself" to "the sole reading of the Scriptures.....for the understanding of the Christian religion,"³ he was amazed to find how plain and intelligible the "mysteries" of the faith actually were. The things a man had to believe were few and simple. All that was necessary for salvation was to have faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Belief in one God was a necessary condition of such faith, and amendment of life was its natural consequence, but Locke's exposition of Christianity consists of little more than a demonstration that one simple statement expresses the entire substance of the faith. "Salvation or perdition," he said, "depends upon believing or rejecting this one proposition."⁴

This radical simplification represents Locke's most characteristic contribution to seventeenth century religious thought. At

1. Locke, op.cit., p.2.

2. Ibid, pp. 4-5.

3. Ibid, Preface.

4. Ibid, p.43.

certain points -- for example in his emphasis on reason -- he amplified what others had said, but his drastic modification of the structure of traditional Christian theology was his own. Locke had certain marked affinities with the Latitudinarians,¹ but, for all their doctrinal vagueness, there is nothing in their writings to match his complete and detailed overthrow of the accepted systems of theology. Even more striking is the contrast between Locke's position and certain representative Socinian statements of belief. At many points the doctrinal agreement is close, but Socinianism, in spite of its divergence from orthodoxy, retained the accustomed theological forms. Its system differed from Calvinism in content but it was no less complicated in structure.² If Locke's treatise on the reasonableness of Christianity had been less encumbered with detailed exegesis, its striking plea for simplicity might have been even more effective than it was, but its influence was manifestly great. The prestige of all the familiar theological systems was waning. With the passage of time they had hardened into inflexible rigidity, and an age awakening to the claims of reason was ready to see them modified or even overthrown. Men did not pause to ask why traditional theology had arisen; they did not see

1. Cf. Fox Bourne, Life of Locke, Vol. II, pp.77, 153-4, for the influence of the Latitudinarians on Locke.

2. Cf. R. S. Franks, History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ, Vol. II, p.159.

that originally it drew its impulse from the need of dealing adequately with some of the profoundest issues of man's spiritual life. The plea for simplicity was necessary, but its results are seen in the thin and superficial plausibility of eighteenth century theology.

The effect of Locke's ruthless revision can best be studied at one particular point. The doctrine of justification by faith had held a distinctive place in Protestant theology for more than a century and a half. Locke did not entirely ignore it, but he unquestionably changed its meaning. God, said Locke, had "found out a way to justify some"¹; those who obeyed the law of faith received the appropriate reward -- they escaped death, which is the penalty of sin. Now the law of faith demands that everyone should believe what God requires him to accept,² and this is summed up in the simple statement to which Locke constantly recurred -- Jesus is Messiah. But there is no clear indication why this belief should decisively affect the relation of the believer to God. The heart of Reformation doctrine had been the claim that the humble acceptance of what Jesus Christ has done places a man on a new footing with God. For Locke, the benefits which Christ confers on the believer can be quite simply stated, and they point to a region wholly different from the intensities

1. Locke, op.cit., p.15.

2. Ibid, p.24-5.

of Pauline experience as interpreted by St. Augustine and Martin Luther. We are indebted to Christ for a clearer perception of the reality of God, a surer grasp of our duties, deliverance from useless ceremonial, encouragement to live a good life, and an assurance that the Holy Ghost will help us.¹ At only one point did Locke in any way refer to the traditional reformed doctrine of the work of Christ. "We know little," said Locke, "of this visible, and nothing at all of the state of that intellectual world, wherein are infinite numbers and degrees of spirits out of the reach of our ken or guess; and therefore know not what transactions there were between God and our Saviour, in reference to His kingdom. We know not what need there was to set up a head and a chieftain in opposition to 'the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air,' etc., of which there are more than obscure intimations in the Scriptures."² But this brief reference is left wholly undeveloped. Locke's own version of justification stems from his belief that the reward of faith is deliverance from death; where we fall short of what is required of us, faith makes good the deficiencies of our obedience, and the substance of this faith is (as we have seen) the simplest possible affirmation. Those who lived before the advent of Christ are justified because they looked for his coming; those who have lived since, because they have received him as

1. Locke, op.cit., p.260f.

2. Ibid, p.255.

Messiah; and those who have never heard of him, can trust to the mercy of God, provided they have accepted the "light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."¹ It is not necessary to emphasise how fundamentally this differs from seventeenth century orthodoxy.

The simplification of doctrine could go no further and still retain the designation Christian. From Locke's drastic modification of theology there followed two important consequences: morality assumed a new importance and authority a new guise.

To give added substance to his exposition of Christianity, Locke laid earnest stress on the necessity of right conduct. The bare statement of belief in Jesus as Messiah was not, he conceded, the entire message of the Apostles; "what they taught....contained a great deal more, but that concerned practice and not belief."² But manifestly our best efforts fall far short of what is required of us, and so amendment of life must stand in the forefront of the Christian message. "Repentance is as absolute a condition of the covenant of grace as faith, and as necessary to be performed as that."³ But repentance, if genuine, would result in a serious effort to express in daily life the sober integrity which the later seventeenth century esteemed so highly. This preoccupation with

1. Locke, op.cit., p.243f.

2. Ibid, p.92.

3. Ibid, p.194; cf. also p.199: "These two, faith and repentance; i.e., believing Jesus to be the Messiah and a good life; are the indispensable conditions of the new covenant." Note also p.228.

morality¹ was related to a parallel trend in the Latitudinarians; what Locke was stating in his books, Tillotson was saying in his sermons, but no one else set forth the claims of the good life so simply and so acceptably as Locke.

Locke, however, had no illusions about the unaided appeal of morality. Those who are disinterested enough to follow righteousness for its own sake are relatively few in number, and Christianity is not a cult for specialists but a "religion suited to vulgar capacities."² There must therefore be inducements strong enough to persuade men to be good, and Locke found them in the rewards which he believed are attached to right conduct. He did not hesitate to urge people to be good on the grounds that they would find it profitable. "The philosophers, indeed, showed the beauty of virtue; they set her off so as to draw men's eyes and approbation to her; but leaving her unendowed, very few were willing to espouse her. The generality could not refuse her their high esteem and commendation; but still turned their backs on her and forsook her, as a match not fit for their turn. But now there being put into the scales on her side 'an exceeding and immortal weight of glory', interest is come about to her, and virtue is now visibly the most enriching purchase, and by much the best bargain."³ This may now seem ethically weak and religiously bad,

1. Locke, Essay, IV, 12, 11; IV, 3, 18.

2. Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, p.302.

3. Ibid, pp.287-8.

but it is in keeping with Locke's whole treatment of Christianity. In the ministry of Jesus he detected consistent evidence of a calculating prudence, which delicately adjusted means to ends. It must be remembered, also, that Locke lived in an age which accepted the idea of rewards without too critical a scrutiny, and the appeal to self-interest was "the favourite passion"¹ of the period.

If persuasion is needed to make men good, authority is equally necessary. Locke did not set much store by moral insight, since he thought that ordinary people would lack it. He expected that "the day-labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairy maids" would be able to follow only the simplest kind of reasoning, and as a result it would be necessary to tell them what to do and what to believe. "The greatest part," he said, "cannot know, and therefore they must believe."² Consequently authority occupies a curiously inconsistent place in Locke's simplified Christianity. Having swept away the complicated superstructure of theology, he still found his residue above the capacity of average people. In spite of the simplicity and reasonableness of what he expounded, Locke conceded that most people would have to accept the truth because they were told to receive it.

1. The phrase is Butler's -- cf. The Analogy, I, IV, 4; I, V, 38; Sermons, I, 6; XI, 8; II, 15.

2. Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, p.285.

Locke believed that he had consistently established his case by appeal to the clear witness of the Scriptures. In his attitude to the Bible, he both reflected the past and anticipated the future. He had grown up in a Puritan atmosphere, and he retained the characteristic Puritan reverence for the inspired word of God. He accepted the Bible as absolutely infallible. "It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter." Yet Locke, unlike many Puritans, recognised that the authority of Scripture could not be equated with his own interpretation of its words. In this respect he represented an interesting transitional position. What the Bible says is decisive in any discussion, but we have to determine its precise meaning with care. Hence our use of the text must be discriminating as well as reverent. Here Locke introduced an exegetical principle of great importance. Like most controversialists of the period, he appealed to one part of the Bible as more authoritative than others, but he gave an illuminating reason for his choice. In the Gospels, he said, we have the key to the Divine purpose, and he dismissed the Epistles of the New Testament as of secondary value. The letters of St. Paul are "occasional" literature, written to meet a specific need at a particular time and place. As a result, they are only fragmentary statements of the truth. "I do not deny, but the great doctrines of the Christian faith are dropt

here and there, and scattered up and down in most of them. But 'tis not in the Epistles we are to learn what are the fundamental articles of the faith, where they are promiscuously, and without distinction, mixed up with other truths which were....only occasional. We shall find and discern those great and necessary points best in the preaching of our Saviour and the Apostles, to those who were yet strangers, and ignorant of the faith, to bring them in and convert them."¹

Underlying this distinction between the relative value of different parts of the Bible is a clear principle: it is "the truth which is to be received and believed, and not scattered sentences in Scripture-language, accomodated to our notions and prejudices."² So Locke outlined what he regarded as the proper method of Bible study, and it is sufficiently important to be stated in his own words. "We must look into the drift of the discourse, observe the coherence and connection of the parts, and see how it is consistent with itself, and other parts of Scripture, if we will conceive it right. We must not cull out, as best suits our system, here and there a period or a verse; as if they were all distinct and independent aphorisms."³ Locke was directly attacking the abuse of "proof texts", but incidentally he anticipated a most important development in Biblical study. He

1. Locke, op.cit., p.295.

2. Ibid, p.291.

3. Ibid, p.292.

affirmed that the Bible possesses unity, within which there is room for wide variety. By consciously setting various strata of the Bible at different levels and dealing with them as their inherent nature demanded, Locke approximated to "the principle of the modern science of Biblical theology."¹ Locke was apt to use his discovery in a haphazard and tendentious way, but that does not obscure the importance of what he did. As the seventeenth century was closing, he outlined an approach to the Bible which has become the basic presupposition of all recent historical criticism. At this point he parted company with his contemporaries, and anticipated the attitude of modern students of the Bible.

The sixteenth century had stated the Protestant doctrine of the Church, and had settled many of its practical implications. But in England certain issues remained to be decided, and in the period which followed the Restoration two of them in particular demanded attention -- the relation of church and state, and the status of religious minorities.

After the experiments of the Interregnum, most Englishmen were content to return to the established church as they had known it before the Civil War. Subsequent events proved, however, that a national church had definite disadvantages. When its titular head was a king like Charles II, the church might find itself seriously embarrassed and even compromised, while James II's attempt to restore

1. R. S. Franks, op.cit., Vol.II, p.164.

Romanism convinced his subjects that further safeguards were urgently needed. Locke was not content to consider merely the practical problems of an established church. In an early essay on the Roman commonwealth,¹ he discussed in detail the implications of a "religious institution". He set forth in characteristic terms the difficulties which arise when an established form of religion is committed to an elaborate doctrinal scheme. "If schisms and heresies were traced up to their original causes, it would be found that they have sprung chiefly from the multiplying articles of faith, and narrowing the bottom of religion by clogging it with creeds, and catechisms and endless niceties about the essences, properties and attributes of God."² This is an early but characteristic form of Locke's plea for a simplified religion, but from it he drew certain inferences regarding the authority a ruler may rightfully exercise. Since all men agree as to the "common principles of religion", a lawgiver can legitimately require his subjects to accept them. If there is to be uniformity, however, he must not venture beyond an effort to enforce a belief in God and an acknowledgment of our duty "to be innocent, good, and just." This implies, of course, a large measure of toleration, but it also suggests certain

1. Reflections Upon the Roman Commonwealth; cf. Fox Bourne, op.cit., Vol.I, p.149f.

2. Ibid, p.149.

principles which ought to govern the relation of church and state. The civil authorities have a legitimate but limited measure of control; they must not exceed it, nor must they allow others to infringe their rights. Locke was emphatic that the power of the priesthood must be curbed. "Priestcraft and tyranny," he said, "go hand in hand." Persecutions, he added, "are generally made to gratify the pride, the ambition, or the interest of the clergy," and he noted with dismay the situation which prevailed throughout most of Europe in his own day. Locke's argument presupposes, then, that a government will be entitled to demand conformity to a simple form of religious belief, but will not undertake to force its subjects to accept any particular doctrinal system. It is the responsibility of the citizen to "do his utmost to live up to the ideal of the Christian life as set forth in the Bible"; it is the duty of the state to make that possible. For an attempt to give practical expression to these views, it is necessary to look beyond England to the new world. The thought of American liberals like Madison and Jefferson bears clear traces of the influence of Locke; so does the constitution they helped to frame.¹

Whenever Locke touched on the relation of church and state he raised the question of religious toleration. Probably no

1. Note Article VI of the constitution of 1787, and the First Amendment, 1791. Cf. H.P. van Dusen in Church and State in the Modern World (New York, 1937), pp.37-9.

other issue facing his contemporaries possessed for him a comparable importance. Toleration followed naturally both from his conception of the nature of knowledge and from his view of the true character of the Christian faith. Detailed consideration of this subject must be postponed until a later chapter, but any discussion of the significance of Locke would be sadly incomplete if it did not include at least a passing reference to the profound importance of his advocacy of liberty of conscience.

Locke spoke to a generation ready to receive precisely what he was prepared to say. The prestige of reason was already high, but he gave it a new status because he defined with a new precision its essential nature. He showed that religion, so often deflected from its proper course by irresponsible "enthusiasm", was eminently reasonable and simple. To an age whose virtues were sober and pedestrian he preached the claims of a morality which was earnest but prosaic. His utilitarianism could go to astonishing¹ lengths, but he rejected materialism as a creed incapable of explaining the mysteries of life. He understood and interpreted

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1. Cf. his attack on poetry in Thoughts Concerning Education: "Methinks the parents should labour to have it (the poetic vein) stifled or suppressed as much as maybe; and I know not what reason a father can have to wish his son a poet, who does not desire to have him bid defiance to all other callings and business....for it is very seldom seen that anyone discovers mines of gold or silver in Parnassus. It is a pleasant air, but a barren soil; and there are very few instances of those who have added to their patrimony by anything they have reaped from thence." The meagre royalties which Milton received for Paradise Lost would doubtless have seemed to Locke a conclusive reason why the poem should never have been written.

Newtonian science to a period increasingly conscious of its importance. The general tone of his writings, said Professor Alexander, "is that of equable common-sense, without emphasis, without enthusiasm, restrained in its judgment, careful of measure, never dull but reflecting evenly from a candid surface, modest when it is most original, because concerned with the faithful presentment of things, rather lambent than fiery, an inspired pedestrianism."¹ To such a writer the end of the seventeenth century was ready to respond. But the praise of common-sense is not the final word regarding Locke. With impressive consistency and selflessness he gave himself to the pursuit of truth, and this explains the peculiar dignity of his works. "He was always, in the greatest and in the smallest affairs of human life, as well as in speculative opinions, disposed to follow reason, whosoever it were that suggested it; he being ever a faithful servant, I had almost said a slave, to truth; never abandoning her for anything else, and following her for her own sake purely."²

1. S. Alexander, Locke, p.23.

2. Lady Masham to Jean Le Clerc, quoted by Fox Bourne as a motto, Life of Locke.

CHAPTER SEVEN. JOHN TOLAND AND THE RISE OF DEISM.

The folly of James II made the Revolution of 1688 a religious event of the first importance. The threat of Romanism had been raised; it was met, and the Protestant faith held the field -- apparently unchallenged. Even in the realm of theology the Revolution had significant results. It created conditions which made possible a critical examination of the form of belief which had so recently triumphed, and thereby it opened a new phase in the discussion of religious problems.

The controversy with Romanism, which had occupied so much time and attention, had worked itself out, and could largely be ignored for a long time to come. Toleration for Protestant dissenters virtually ended another debate which had raged intermittently for nearly a generation. The Protestant faith, though to all appearance firmly established, was not immune to criticism. It had defeated its foes, and now its own adherents were free in a new way to examine the presuppositions of their belief. "The time was ripe," remarks Professor Sorley, "for the discussion of the content and basis of Protestant theology."¹ Moreover, the Revolution had given toleration the respectability which belongs to success. The idea was supported by the rapidly

1. W. R. Sorley, History of English Philosophy (Cambridge, 1920), p.145.

increasing authority of Locke; some might object and many might be dubious¹, but the granting of toleration meant that the bounds of permissible discussion had been vastly extended. At the moment when men were ready to examine the tenets of Protestantism, they found themselves free to do so. One result was the great Trinitarian controversy; another was the rise of Deism.

Deism was not, strictly speaking, a new phenomenon. Lord Herbert of Cherbury had advanced many of the ideas which became characteristic of the school, and early in the eighteenth century his connection with the movement was explicitly recognized.² His five fundamental religious truths³ served as the foundation of Charles Blount's religion of reason, and so passed directly into the antecedents of Deism. Blount defended the merits of natural religion, and even emphasized the advantages of the various heathen faiths.⁴ His translation of the Life of Apollonius of Tyana (1680) gave him a chance to suggest by means of sneers and innuendoes that the miracles of Christ were really very much the same as the impostures of Apollonius. But the implied

1. Cf. The Letters of Humphrey Prideaux...to John Ellis..., 1674-1722 (Camden Society, 1875), p.154; Note also Toland, Christianity Not Mysterious, p.113.

2. Cf. Halyburton, Natural Religion Insufficient (1714).

3. Lord Herbert's five fundamental truths were, (1) that God exists; (2) that it is a duty to worship him; (3) that the practice of virtue is the true mode of doing him honour; (4) that man is under the obligation to repent of his sins; (5) that there will be rewards and punishments after death.

4. Blount, Anima Mundi, (1679), passim.

attack on Christ's person was actually much less significant than the indications scattered throughout his writings, that religion was only an expression of the baseness and credulity of man.

In himself, Blount was not a person of much importance, but he is worth noting because he put in writing thoughts which many of his contemporaries were content to leave as spoken words. Blount expressed what was in many minds -- otherwise Charles Leslie would never have attacked him as he did. His Short and Easy Method With the Deists is important because, in spite of its brevity and ease, it was necessary at all. The kind of argument Leslie used is most effective when it can be assumed. "To defend the undeniable is a grave admission that denial has touched us."¹

Blount opened the attack on revelation, but the dangerous fact was that many Englishmen were living "as if God were dead."² This was a much more serious threat to religion than any amount of theoretical infidelity. The members of the court might go to chapel at Whitehall or St.James's, but the tenour of their lives defied the substance of everything they heard when they were there. To the sympathy of this element in society anyone attacking traditionalism in religion could confidently appeal. In addition there were many who had no share in the excesses of high society but who sat equally light to the claims of religion. The gentleman of fashion

1. John Oman, The Problem of Faith and Freedom, p.95.

2. Ibid, p.91.

was defined by Shaftesbury as a person "to whom a natural good genius or the force of a good education has given a sense of what is naturally graceful and becoming." The wits of the coffee houses were too much addicted to banter to consider seriously the essentials -- let alone the intricacies -- of religion.¹ Their presence encouraged a new kind of discussion and determined the manner in which it should be conducted.

As the century ended, public opinion was more and more directed and controlled by the men of wit and fashion. The tyranny of the coffee house was increasing, and the manner of religious debate of necessity changed. The weighty armour which controversialists had formerly carried might still be useful in some quarters, but the refinements of patristic learning were lost on the men who were now the arbiters of taste. They considered themselves competent to judge of any matter worthy of an intelligent man's attention, but they expected that it would be presented in such a way that any intelligent man could understand it. The same canons which now ruled in the pulpit held good in the press. Those who discussed religion in books and pamphlets had to be as simple and direct as Tillotson had been in his sermons. The infinite elaboration which had once been customary was regarded now as a conspiracy to forestall the exercise of reason and so to leave men's minds enchained in superstition. This, as we shall

1. Cf. The Letters of Humphrey Prideaux &c, (letter written in 1693), p.162.

see, had important consequences in determining the character of the deistic controversy.

By the end of the century, public opinion was ready to consider seriously the problems which the Deists raised. Lord Herbert of Cherbury had indicated the approach to religion which the Deists developed. Thomas Hobbes and the Cambridge Platonists had in various ways helped to focus men's attention on the demands of rational theology. Controversy could now be carried on with a freedom hitherto scarcely possible, and men were ready to discuss in simple and intelligible terms the significance of the Protestant faith. Blount had shown the measure of sympathy which views like those of Deism could command, but he was too isolated and too erratic to be more than the forerunner of the school.

In 1696 John Toland published anonymously his Christianity Not Mysterious. With the appearance of this little book the Deistic controversy began in earnest. Toland was not a great writer, and in many ways his work was slight enough, but the charged state of the intellectual atmosphere made it profoundly important. It created an astonishing degree of consternation, and the civil power was summoned to deal with so dangerous a book.¹

Behind Toland's book contemporaries sensed the rapidly increasing authority of John Locke. Toland, indeed, did not

1. Christianity Not Mysterious was presented as a nuisance by the grand jury of Middlesex, and was ordered to be burnt by the parliament of Ireland. Robert South loudly applauded the action of the Irish legislators.

mention Locke by name, and never appealed directly to his works, but the connection was too obvious to be missed. Locke, of course, was not responsible for the inferences which the Deists drew from his work; indeed, he explicitly and emphatically repudiated them, but the fact remains that Locke had already indicated the issues with which controversialists were to be concerned for many a day to come. His writings had this effect at least, that they firmly and irrevocably placed all discussion in the court of reason,¹ and Christianity Not Mystrious was important because it professed to apply precisely those principles which Locke had outlined. In the first section of his book, Toland discussed the character of reason, and his dependence on Locke is too obvious for anyone to miss. The point from which his whole argument proceeds is the view that knowledge consists in the agreement of ideas. When discussing the four means of knowledge available to us, he gives pride of place to the experience of the senses and the experience of the mind; the first corresponds exactly to Locke's sensation, the second to Locke's reflection. In many places the very words he uses are the words of Locke. When he contrasts the "plain, convincing instructions of Christ" with "the intricate, ineffective declamations of the scribe"² he might easily be quoting from The Reasonableness of Christianity. His appeal to "the simplicity

1. Cf. Mark Pattison, Essays, Vol.II, p.45.

2. Toland, Christianity Not Mystrious, p.xxi.

of truth"¹ is worthy of Locke himself. More important than verbal echoes is the similarity which links his conceptions to those of Locke. In dealing with revelation he is as closely indebted to Locke as when he is discussing the character of reason.

At the same time, it is quite possible to exaggerate the significance of this dependence. Toland was manifestly inspired by Locke, but he was not subservient to him. He was more aggressive in applying his principles, and he carried the discussion much further than Locke. Whereas Locke was content to show that Christianity is reasonable, Toland proved that nothing contrary to reason and nothing above it can be a part of Christian doctrine. Even the phrasing of his title² indicates the kind of inference he drew from Locke's views. "Reasonable" now means "not mysterious"; anything that "can be properly called a mystery" is excluded. It is possible, moreover, to exaggerate the degree to which the Deists as a whole were the disciples of Locke. They used his phrases and certain of his conceptions, they took advantage of his authority to gain a hearing for their views, but they did not seriously attempt to develop his philosophical position.³ The

1. Toland, op.cit., p.54.

2. "Christianity Not Mysterious, or a Treatise Shewing That There is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor Above it; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly called a Mystery."

3. Cf. F.R. Tennant, Miracle, (Cambridge, 1925), p.7. As Dr. Tennant points out, the Deists were not philosophical Deists at all. Indeed the view of the relation of God to the world maintained by philosophical Deism was one which the English Deists emphatically repudiated, and which, in common with their more orthodox contemporaries, they denounced as atheism. Cf. Bentley's definition of Deism, Confutation of Atheism, p.7.

Deists were not primarily philosophers at all, and, in so far as they were, their fundamental assumptions were apparently closer to those of Spinoza than to those of Locke. Consequently, though the debt they owed to Locke is extensive, it is comparatively superficial. They appealed to him because he had done more than anyone else to establish the current "climate of opinion." He had exalted reason, and it was to reason that they appealed, but they were not interested in nor concerned with Locke's basic pre-suppositions.

In the preface to Christianity Not Mysterious, Toland clearly indicated the method he proposed to follow. "I prove first," he said, "that the true religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible. Next I show that these requisite conditions are found in Christianity. But seeing a man of good parts and knowledge may easily frame a clear and coherent system, I demonstrate, thirdly, that the Christian religion was not formed after such a manner, but was divinely revealed from Heaven."¹ In this brief statement, Toland defined both his position and the way in which he intended to unfold it. The second and third parts of his scheme he deferred to subsequent works, but, though these were never written, it is easy enough to supply, from what he actually completed, the unfinished parts. Probably the second of his three projected works was never written because Toland realised that the first had made

1. Toland, op.cit., Preface, p.xxvii.

it superfluous. Even the contents of the third can be conjectured without difficulty. But more important than Toland's specific intentions or his failure to achieve them is the manner of approach which marks his work. It is here that he makes a genuine contribution and registers an important change. His method is that which, with slight variations, all the Deists adopted. It is true that many of his immediate successors would have allowed no place for the third part of Toland's scheme, but in all essential respects his method is theirs, and this represents a decisive break with the traditions of theological controversy. Much of the literature of seventeenth century debate is now almost unreadable. The solemn parade of authorities, the meticulous care with which every sentence, almost every clause, of an adversary's work is refuted, reflects a temper wholly different from that of the modern age. In Toland, however, both the method and the outlook are such as "distinguish modernity from nearer antiquity."¹ You may agree with him or not, but at least you can read him with relative ease.

The outline and argument of Christianity Not Mysterious are comparatively simple. Here, again, a comparison with one of Andrewes' sermons shows how far religious discussion had moved since the beginning of the century. It was Toland's aim to show that Christianity conforms in all respects to the canons of

1. F. R. Tennant, Miracle, p.96.

reason. In the first section of the book he defined reason, and in the second he proved that the doctrines of the Gospel are not contrary to it. Finally he carried the discussion a stage further by demonstrating that there is nothing mysterious, or above reason, in Christianity.

Reason is manifestly the crucial term in the discussion, and Toland, as we have seen, approached it in much the same way as Locke. He equated it with demonstration, and described it as "that faculty of the soul which discovers the certitude of anything dubious or obscure, by comparing it with something evidently known."¹ Reason is "the only foundation of all certitude"; "nothing revealed, whether as to its manner or existence, is more exempt from its disquisitions, than the ordinary phenomena of Nature."² The material with which Reason deals comes to us from experience or authority, and under the latter Toland carefully reserved a place for "divine authority or divine revelation."³ But even so he allowed no invasion of the domain of reason. In His wisdom God has made all things, even the truths He discloses, answerable to reason. He "who had enabled us to perceive things and form judgments of them, has also endued us with the power of suspending our judgments about whatever is uncertain, and of never assenting but to clear

1. Toland, op.cit., p.12.

2. Ibid, p.6.

3. Ibid, p.14f.

perceptions." He has provided "that we should discern and embrace the truth, by taking it out of our power to dissent from an evident proposition."¹ Since, then, God has made it possible for us "to bow before the light and majesty of evidence,"² all our false notions are due to "our own anticipation and inattention." If we destroy ourselves, the fault is wholly ours. There remains, of course, the disconcerting fact that people seem to choose the wrong rather than the right and to prefer falsehood to truth. But this was no problem to Toland. The explanation was that "the evident propositions" have not been made evident; if others do not see the cogency of our argument, it is because, through the use of ill-digested material, we have failed to make its nature clear.³

In connection with Toland's use of reason, three comments will suffice. It was manifestly effective, because it determined one of the salient features of the Deistic controversy. It was successful because it appealed to the prevailing standard of judgment, and took advantage of the immense prestige Locke had recently conferred on reason. In the second place, Toland's use of the term is open to the criticism which applies to all the chief deistic writers. They regarded the human reason as a

1. Toland, op.cit., p.20.

2. Ibid, p.21.

3. Ibid, pp.21-2.

static and infallible faculty, possessed by the human mind from the very first.¹ Finally, the importance of Toland's position is due to the results of his insistence on reason as the sole instrument for acquiring and judging truth. This had far-reaching consequences in the theology of the eighteenth century.

Granted the authority of reason, it was a matter of no slight importance to determine the nature and authority of revelation. To Toland its role was perfectly clear; to him it was no more than a "mean of information."² He conceded that it possesses a high degree of authority, since "it is the manifestation of truth by truth itself, to whom it is impossible to lie."³ But it is both dangerous and useless if once allowed to escape into the realm of the irrational. It has often been advanced as though it had "a right of silencing or extinguishing reason."⁴ Actually anything a person believes must be within the bounds of reason and possibility; "I say possibility," added Toland, "for omnipotence itself can do no more."⁵ If we do not recognize the authority of reason, even divine revelation could not save us from "the impostures and traditions of men."⁶ Anything, therefore,

1. Cf. F. R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, Vol.II (Cambridge,1930), p.224.

2. Toland, op.cit., p.38.

3. Ibid, p.14.

4. Ibid, p.37.

5. Ibid, p.39.

6. Ibid, p.41.

that is revealed, whether by God or men, must be both intelligible and possible, and he regarded divine revelation as notably distinguishable by its greater certainty. Men might deceive us; God will not. "We are then to expect the same degree of perspicuity from God as from men, though more of certitude from the first than from the last."¹ But even God could not communicate with men "if what he said did not agree with their common notions."²

So, while Toland maintained revelation as a useful term in the religious vocabulary, he gave it a meaning quite different from that assigned to it by most of his contemporaries. Unlike the later Deists, he neither denied nor disparaged revelation, but he subtly altered its significance, and his position, if pressed to its logical conclusion, would have rendered revelation largely superfluous. At times, indeed, he himself suggested as much. He was not willing to decide the delicate question of precedence between these two disputed terms; "in a word, I see no need of comparison in this case, for reason is not less from God than revelation; 'tis the candle, the guide, the judge he has lodged within every man that cometh into the world."³ It was only a short step to assign to reason, as some of his successors did,

1. Toland, op.cit., p.43.

2. Ibid, p.133.

3. Ibid, p.146.

all the functions of revelation.

It was Toland's principal purpose, if we may judge by the disposition of his material, to prove that nothing mysterious had any rightful place in Christianity. He appealed to the New Testament to show that the word is only properly used of things which were once obscure or hidden, but from which "the veil is actually taken away."¹ "Doctrines so revealed cannot now be properly called mysteries."² It is true that our knowledge is limited at many points; we know no more of bodies than is useful or necessary, but we can claim to "comprehend anything when its chief properties and their several uses are known to us."³ Many Christian doctrines, even those that seem abstruse, we can explain as "familiarly" as we do natural things. Neither God nor eternity is a mystery. By "God" we understand His attributes and properties, which we know; if we are ignorant of His essence, we are no wiser as regards any of His creatures. So Toland returned to the confident affirmation that in the Christian Scriptures the word "mystery" is used "not from any present inconceivableness or obscurity, but with respect to what they were before this revelation."⁴

Around "reason", "revelation", and "mystery" Toland arranged practically all he had to say. Much of it was neither very original

1. Toland, op.cit., p.73.

2. Ibid, p.74.

3. Ibid, p.77.

4. Ibid, p.91.

nor very profound, but nearly all his principal points represented a departure from what had been generally characteristic of seventeenth century theology. Moreover, at many incidental points his position is significant in view of subsequent developments.

Deism ultimately became a strong attack on orthodox Christianity, but Toland wrote as a professed believer in the Protestant faith and as a loyal member of the Church of England. He was anxious, of course, to free it from superstitious accretions, but throughout he took its essential validity for granted. In this Toland represented an interesting development. As the seventeenth century ended, the impetus to theological debate came from within the church, but not from among the professed theologians.¹ Locke is a notable instance of the layman's interest in religious discussion, and so, in spite of his diffidence in publishing, is Newton. Eventually the lay contributions to theology became bitter and destructive, but to the end of the seventeenth century the motive was an earnest desire to cleanse Christianity and restore it to its primitive simplicity. In this respect Toland was wholly characteristic. He was not disguising bad principles beneath fair professions. "I write with all the sincerity and simplicity imaginable," he said in the preface to his work,² and he claimed the freedom and assurance of those who defend or illustrate the

1. Cf. W. R. Sorley, *op.cit.*, p.145.

2. Toland, *op.cit.*, p.x.

truth.¹ At the end he returned to the same note -- "I have undertaken to shew others what I'm fully convinced of myself."²

Toland wrote as a member of the Christian community, but he never disguised his contempt of the constituted leaders of the Church. He was not yet a critic from without, but he anticipated the new day in the sharpness and severity of his attacks on theologians and ecclesiastics. This was a very different note from that struck by Isaac Walton or John Evelyn. Here we have theology by a layman who frankly repudiated the guidance of the leaders of the Church. He accused those who normally wrote theology of a bigotted attachment to the externals of the faith.³ They treated mere sounds "as if they were the essence of true religion, but these empty words have been invented by some leading men to make plain things obscure, and not seldom to cover their own ignorance." Even Scripture was wrested from its true meaning to support their "scholastic jargon."⁴ The whole character of theological learning cried out for reform. "But the common method of teaching and supporting this mystery of iniquity is still more intolerable. 'How many voluminous systems, infinitely more difficult than the Scriptures, must be read with great attention by him that would be master of the present theology? What prodigious number of

1. Toland, op.cit., p.i.

2. Ibid, p.174.

3. Ibid, p.vi.

4. Ibid, pp.xi-xii.

barbarous words (mysterious no doubt), what tedious and immethodical directions, what ridiculous and discrepant interpretations must you patiently learn and observe, before you can begin to understand a professor of that faculty?"¹ The obscurantism of "the numerous partisans of error" would have been serious enough in itself, but the motive behind it, Toland hinted, was love of gain.² The leaders would not see the light lest the truth might prove too costly in its demands.

The authorities of the past commanded no more respect from Toland than those of the present. To "the plain paths of reason" he contrasted the "impenetrable labyrinths of the Fathers."³ Even when he proved that the Fathers were on his side, he dismissed them with a contemptuous reference to their negligible weight in any modern discussion. This depreciation of authority, though by no means original, is important in more respects than one. It is only necessary to read the theology of the seventeenth century to realize the weight which a quotation from the classics or the Fathers carried. The kind of protest which Toland voiced was necessary if discussion was ever to emerge from the undergrowth of pedantry and learning. Toland was not the first to object, nor was he alone. Tillotson's sermons indicate the new way in

1. Toland, op.cit., p.xxiv.

2. Ibid, p.vii.

3. Ibid, p.xxiii.

which the discussion of religion was intended to persuade rather than overawe the hearer.¹ The authority of those addressed had displaced the authority of those to whom appeal was made. The cult of reason was definitely reacting on the value attached to the opinions of the past. In many ways this was wholly salutary; it helped to lift the heavy hand of a tradition which was often largely lifeless. At the end of the century the Deists recapitulated one of the most significant developments of their age. All the progressive movements of the previous generation had insisted that religious thought must be freed from an authoritative scholasticism; the Deists amplified and emphasized the arguments which others had set forth. This explains also their adoption of the method of doubt in their search for intellectual certainty; it was their substitute for "the arrogance of groundless opinion." But for our purposes the protest against authority is also important as an illustration of one of the marked limitations of the Deists. They belonged to an age which had seen historical interest revive but which had as yet acquired no historical outlook. They were naively unconscious of any progress in the past, and as a result they could neither understand the character of other ages nor appreciate their records. They judged the writings of other days by the standards of their own time, or else compared them with a wholly mythical picture of a vanished golden age. Toland

1. Cf. Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, p.50.

was incapable of appreciating the Fathers whom he denounced because he was unable to visualize the times in which they lived.

One by one Toland demolished the concepts to which his opponents usually appealed. He would give no special deference to authorities, either living or dead, and revelation became the appeal of God to man's reason. In the same drastic way he dealt with another term which had been much beloved by seventeenth century writers. Faith was utterly dethroned from the high position assigned it by Puritan and Anglican alike. As the eighteenth century dawned it had become nothing more "than a firm persuasion built upon substantial reasons."¹ In Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac we are confronted with an example of "very strict reasoning from experience, from the possibility of the thing, and from the power, justice, and immutability of him that promised it." This is a long step from the mentality of the middle years of the seventeenth century.

Miracle, like revelation, eventually became one of the storm centres of the Deistic controversy. Toland did not represent the developed position of his school, but in important respects he anticipated their conclusions. He first introduced the subject while proving the unalterably rational character of Christianity. Its essentially intelligible nature was proved by "the miracles, method and style of the New Testament."² If the appeal of Christ

1. Toland, op.cit., p.138.

2. Ibid, p.46.

had not been to men's understanding, his miracles would have served no useful purpose; they act, indeed, as safeguards against any demand that we should believe "revealed nonsense."¹ At the same time, Toland admitted that miracles are often the final refuge of the advocates of mystery. Though a miracle is "some action exceeding all human power and which the laws of nature cannot perform by the ordinary powers," he maintained rigorously that anything "contrary to reason cannot be a miracle."² It is clear where this will ultimately lead. When he demanded that a miracle "must be something in itself intelligible and possible"³ he was opening the way for the suggestion that miracles, as usually defined, were neither the one nor the other. This inference was promptly drawn, and the characteristic of most of the Deistic writers is the supercilious attitude they adopted whenever miracles were mentioned. They did not deny on a priori grounds the possibility of miracles; they even admitted that for the vulgar they might serve a useful apologetic purpose. But when religion consisted in the performance of duties, miracles were utterly superfluous. This attitude, of course, was never adopted by the average English writer on religion, but in part it reflected, and in part it created, a different approach to the

1. Toland, op.cit., p.49.

2. Ibid, p.150.

3. Ibid, p.152.

whole question. Miracle, as Toland quite justly pointed out, had been the last court of appeal for many seventeenth century writers. In the eighteenth century it remained, with prophecy, a favourite defence of the validity of revelation, but the deistic protest had had its effect. Miracle was treated in a more guarded and cautious fashion, and its place in a rational system of belief was constantly emphasized.

Parallel to the depreciation of miracles was the repudiation of superstition. The possibility of miracle in an ordered world was carefully limited to occasions when there was "some weighty design becoming the divine wisdom and majesty." This was the surest safeguard against superstitious tales, stories of the activities of witches, and accounts of the miracles performed by the devil. There were multitudes of such stories current in all parts of the English country-side, and they were seen as an infallible measure of the backward -- even barbarous -- condition of the people. Here again Toland reflected a change which was making steady headway at the end of the seventeenth century. Only a few years before, a fellow of the Royal Society like Glanvill could assiduously gather tales of tapping devils in the belief that he was undergirding the cause of true religion. Henry More, a distinguished philosopher and a Cambridge don, regarded a belief in witches and evil spirits as a defence against the advance of atheism. Yet throughout the period the fear of witchcraft was steadily declining.

The numbers of prosecutions fell off, and by the end of the century trials for witchcraft had virtually ceased.¹ In this respect Toland spoke for the new day. It was a task worthy of an apostle, he said, "to convince the mind, to dispel ignorance, to eradicate superstition, to propagate truth and reformation of manners."²

No study of changes of thought would be complete if it ignored the attitude men adopted toward the Christian Scriptures. Throughout the seventeenth century the authority of the Bible had been paramount. The Deists never went so far as to question the special place it occupied in all religious discussion, but already the attitude was changing. The old veneration had disappeared. Toland assumed the divinity of the New Testament,³ and appealed to it constantly, but he insisted that its authority, like that of all revelation, must be tested by reason. The proof of the divinity of Scripture depended on reason, for "if the clear light of the one be anyway contradicted, how shall we be convinced of the infallibility of the other?"⁴ Toland realized that this was a marked departure from accepted standards. It was common enough in the seventeenth century to make Scripture and reason appear contradictory, but the belief of those who did so, said Toland, was "at the mercy of every gust of doctrine....To believe

1. W. Notestein, History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718 (1911), p.282f.

2. Toland, op.cit., p.55.

3. Ibid, p.xxvi.

4. Ibid, p.31.

the divinity of Scripture or the sense of any passage thereof, without rational proofs and an evident consistency, is a blameable credulity and a temerarious opinion, ordinarily maintained out of a gainful prospect."¹ This explains Toland's consistent appeal to the original meaning of the New Testament. His lack of historical perspective meant that he actually appealed, not to the intent of the first century writers, but to the reason of his own day. But though the method might not achieve its desired results, the change of attitude is too important to ignore.

"Christianity Not Mysterious" appeared in 1696. A hundred years later Edmund Burke could dismiss the Deists as a school of writers wholly ignored and largely forgotten. For a short time they profoundly affected English religious thought, and then disappeared into obscurity. From Toland's book -- the first important contribution to the main controversy -- it is easy to detect some of the reasons why their influence was so ephemeral. There are faults of taste and good feeling so gross as to force themselves inescapably upon the reader's notice. The egotistical note is too prominent -- as in the self-conscious posturing as a lone champion of light against obscurantist hordes, or in the touch of bravado with which Toland classes himself with St. Paul as one who does not "value this cheap and ridiculous nickname of heretic."² As Sir Leslie Stephen

1. Toland, op.cit., p.36.

2. Ibid, p.174.

pointed out, Toland often introduced new arguments without recognizing the conclusions to which ultimately they tended;¹ he lacked the insight or the courage to press his points to their logical conclusion. He hinted, of course, that there were penalties for those too free in **their** speculations about truth, but he also claimed to be above considerations of mere prudence. It is only fair to remember, however, that if he failed to see where the discussion would eventually lead, he could claim in this the company of many men, both before his time and after, who were both abler and wiser than himself. Mark Pattison pointed out a more serious defect when he insisted on the religious short-comings of the Deists. They were the advocates, he said, of a thin creed, an intellectualism devoid of all true religious fervour. They stood aloof from any missionary venture, they brought forth no practical fruits.² This is a severe indictment, but sometimes you feel that when Toland proves his point it is only because he has ignored the true character of religious experience.³ Though he wrote about the Christian religion, he maintained, as did the Deists generally, a consistent silence regarding its founder. He was apparently unconscious of the omission, and unaware of its

1. Leslie Stephen, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (1876) Vol. II, p.110.

2. Mark Pattison, Essays, Vol.II, p.84f.

3. Cf. John Oman, The Problem of Faith and Freedom, p.108.

possibly damaging results. The serious aspects of man's plight wholly escaped him, and his treatment of sin was little short of trivial. If a drunkard says "I cannot give over drinking," he really means, remarked Toland, "I will not." To overcome our human frailties we need only acknowledge them, and amendment of life is simple enough to those who are not self-deceived.¹ This is indeed to "heal the hurt of my people slightly."

When to these defects we add the obsolete presuppositions the Deists accepted and the crude learning they displayed, it is not surprising that they have been neglected by posterity. The neglect, says Dr. Tennant, is undeserved. For all their shortcomings, these men, he claims, represent "the beginning of modernity in English theology."² They advocated a natural theology which may be open to criticism at many points, but they realized that if revelation were wholly divorced from an underlying natural religion it would run the risk of degenerating into superstition. For all the defects of their conception of reason, they saw that in the pursuit of truth it is a guide we cannot ignore, for even God is powerless to speak to us if we forsake its leading. Their positive contributions to religious thought were comparatively few, and their writings soon forgotten, but they

1. Toland, op.cit., pp.59, 62.

2. Tennant, Miracle, p.96.

helped to create a new outlook which had important consequences in the eighteenth century, and whose effects, for good and ill are not exhausted even yet.

CHAPTER EIGHT. THE CHURCH AND THE CIVIL POWER.

When the Restoration brought back old forms of government in church and state, most Englishmen unquestionably hoped that in the future any serious change would be superfluous. They believed that the new day demanded an effort to confirm and strengthen the institutions which had so recently been shaken, and they looked forward to a period which might be constructive in aim but would certainly be conservative in temper. But in one sphere after another the expectations of thoughtful men proved false. The changes which took place might not be dramatic or spectacular -- even the political revolution which ended the period was singularly orderly in character -- but they were often far-reaching in their effect, and in large part the fascination of Restoration history lies in the struggle between the old forms men desired to keep and the new forms they were forced to accept.

In no region did change seem more unlikely than in the realm of political theory. The recent civil turmoil reinforced the general desire for stability; men wanted a theory of sovereignty which would fortify the reestablished form of government. But in the seventeenth century political thought was still largely influenced by theological considerations. The arguments which theorists used were related at every point to religious issues; they were enforced by appeals to Scripture; if challenged, it

was in the name of a more satisfactory understanding of the Bible.

This general tendency was accentuated by the nature of the theory which found special favour in the generation following the Restoration. The belief that kings ruled by divine right was an ancient theory; the events of the first half of the seventeenth century had given it a new importance; with the return of Charles II it came back with vastly enhanced authority. For nearly thirty years it was the view expounded by both political theorists and theologians. With the fall of James II it was overthrown, completely and forever. Few changes in religious thought were more decisive in character.

The antecedents of the theory of divine right reach back into the middle ages. When first developed, the theory was necessary as a defence against the encroachments of an aggressive papacy, and it played a notable part in the struggle to establish the independence of national sovereignties. "The doctrine was an essential element in the struggle against the political claims of the papacy,"¹ and it further proved its usefulness in helping to make possible the English Reformation. It was only natural, therefore, that the leaders of the Elizabethan church should be at pains to elaborate the theory and indicate its logical consequences. The obvious deduction to be drawn from the divine

1. J. N. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, (Cambridge, 1914 - second edition), p.15.

. right of kings was the subject's duty of giving unquestioning and unlimited obedience. This was, of course, more than simply a natural inference suggested by reason; it was a defence against what seemed the dangerously democratic tendencies which were already gaining ground, and which could also quote Scripture for their purpose. The necessity of non-resistance to constituted authority early became a fixed element in the teaching of the English Reformers. A rebel, it appeared, "was worse than the worst prince, and rebellion worse than the worst government of the worst prince."¹ This was an emphasis which King James I both welcomed and amplified. In a series of works -- Basilikon Doron, The True Law of Free Monarchies, The Duty of a King in His Royal Office -- he embroidered with wearisome reiteration his favourite theme of the divine character of monarchy. "The state of monarchy," he declared, "is the supremest thing upon earth, for Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called Gods.....God hath power to create or destroy, make or unmake at his pleasure, to give life or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accomptable to none: to raise low things, and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have Kings."² This was manifestly doctrine which kings

1. From the homily on Obedience, Second Book of Homilies, issued by the queen's authority in 1563.

2. The Duty of a King in His Royal Office. This work is a revision of the second part of Basilikon Doron, and appeared in 1642. (Quoted by L. M. Hawkins, Allegiance in Church and State, (London, 1928), p.4).

might well delight to expound, but it was also a claim which clerics were ready to echo. The divine right of kings had proved effective as a defence against the claims of papists and puritans alike, and monarchy and church made common cause against both.¹

In the canons of 1606 and 1640 the origins of society are established in God, and those who resist authority are declared to receive to themselves damnation.

But the doctrine, though embellished by churchmen and elaborated with delight by kings, was not widely held among the people. The story of the struggle between Charles I and his parliaments makes it perfectly clear that many even of the royalists would not accept the theological arguments with which bishops might defend the royal supremacy. [†]Stafford, as firmly convinced as anyone that the king's authority must be strengthened, founded his case on considerations of a much less theological nature. The opponents of the king, meanwhile, appealed to precedent and law in a way which really evaded the crucial question of the ultimate source of sovereignty. The struggle between king and parliament might for the present leave the theoretical problem unsolved, but in the end it decided the issue in its own way. At the beginning of the conflict many royalists might dissent from

1. Note the way in which this two-fold antipathy remained a constant factor in the discussion of the divine right of kings. Cf. Filmer, Patriarcha (edition of 1884), p.11: "This tenet (that man is naturally endowed with freedom) was first hatched in the schools, and hath been fostered by all succeeding Papists for good divinity. The divines, also, of the Reformed Churches have entertained it.....It contradicts the doctrine and history of the Holy Scriptures, the constant practice of all ancient monarchies, and the very principles of the law of nature."

the theories of absolute sovereignty advanced by the king and his immediate advisors. The overthrow of the royal cause, however, brought about an increasingly close identification between the support of monarchy and the acceptance of the doctrine of Divine right. The results of challenging the king's authority appeared so serious that the claims of passive obedience acquired a wholly new insistence. More and more the opponents of Cromwell found themselves committed to the doctrine of non-resistance to hereditary and legitimate rulers, and this in turn was only a logical inference from that conception of royal rights which throughout the Interregnum steadily gained ground among those who opposed Cromwell's "tyranny".

The fear of anarchy and the desire to curb social unrest became complementary manifestations of a single deep-seated concern. The dread of civil turmoil was perhaps the most conspicuous legacy which the Civil War bequeathed to English life, but it is important to remember that at every turn religious motives supported political apprehensions.¹

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1. For an expression of the views of the great majority of the clergy at a time when the struggle between king and parliament was manifestly moving toward a crisis, cf. Cardwell, Synodalia, Vol. I, p. 389: "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 Scripture, which is, that kings should rule and command in their several dominions all persons of what rank or estate soever, whether ecclesiastical or civil....For any person or persons to set up, maintain or avow in any their said realms or territories respectively, under any pretence whatsoever, any independent coactive power, either papal or popular, (whether directly or indirectly) is to undermine their great royal office, and cunningly to overthrow that most sacred ordinance which God Himself hath established; and so is treasonable against God as
(this note is continued on p. 198)

When the Restoration finally brought back the old forms of government, leaders both in church and state were in complete agreement as to the theological basis on which their view of monarchy should rest. Before the wars, the clergy had been prepared to support a view of kingship which many even of the king's supporters viewed with grave distrust; now they all stood on common ground. In a day when men dreaded chaos beyond all else, the divine right of kings had an immediate practical bearing on political issues.

The theory had played an important part in bringing back King Charles II to his father's throne, and its results quickly became apparent in the legislation of the new reign. The prevailing interpretation of monarchy in large part explains the fear of and antipathy to the nonconformists: these were the men who had conceived rebellion in their hearts, and had been responsible for the hideous crime of regicide.¹ It explains the determination to force on those who in all other respects were loyal citizens an explicit repudiation of the Covenant and of the right, under any circumstances whatsoever, to resist authority. It culminated in

well as against the king. For subjects to bear arms against their kings, offensive or defensive, upon any pretence whatsoever, is at least to resist the powers which are ordained of God; and though they do not invade, but only resist, yet S. Paul tells them plainly they shall receive to themselves damnation."

1. Note Seth Ward's conviction that the late rebellion had been the occasion for God to show miraculously his great mercy in the restoration of the legitimate ruler: "...but the Lord liveth, which hath delivered us from the tyranny and bloody rage of the wild fanatical enthusiasts." Against Resistance of Lawful Powers (1661), pp.37-8.

the Clarendon Code, and inspired the declaration which the Act of Uniformity required of all schoolmasters. "I A. B. do declare that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the King, and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person or against those that are commissioned by him."¹

In the first flush of triumph, churchmen were not content that their views should find expression in the laws of the land. With wearisome monotony they embellished their favourite theme in books, pamphlets and sermons. Even though their view had gained an unquestioned ascendancy, they considered it their duty to confirm their people in an unquestioning acceptance of the fulness of the king's authority and the limitless extent of the subject's obedience. The revised Prayer Book, with its commemoration of the death of the late king and of the restoration of his son, provided added pretexts for preaching passive obedience, and each year on January 30 and May 29 "the pulpits rang with the revived tenets of divine indefeasible hereditary right, of passive obedience, and of the sinfulness of rebellion."² Such subjects were almost mandatory on the state holy days, but they were popular enough at other times as well. Robert South, perhaps the most popular

1. The Act of Uniformity, 14 Car. II, c.4.

2. Norman Sykes, Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century, (Cambridge, 1934), p.25.

preacher of the early years of the Restoration period, returned to this congenial theme again and again. "The Church of England," he claimed, "glories in nothing more than that she is the truest friend to kings, and to kingly government, of any other church in the world; that they were the same hands that took the crown from the King's head and the mitre from the Bishops'."¹ The subject lent itself admirably both to South's fervent loyalty and to his bitter hatred of "fanaticks", but it was soberly set forth by men with far less brilliant and incisive powers of speech. Even the Latitudinarians accepted in its fulness the prevailing view. In the famous incident of Lord William Russell's trial and execution, Burnet and Tillotson laboured hard to persuade the condemned man to acknowledge the sinfulness of resistance, and Tillotson set forth his views with the greatest clarity. There were he said, three reasons for the position which the church adopted. "First that the Christian religion doth plainly forbid the resistance of authority; secondly, that though our religion be established by law (which his lordship argued as a difference between their case and that of the primitive Christians), yet in the same law which established our religion, it is declared that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take up arms etc. Besides that, there is a particular law declaring the power of the militia to be solely in the king. And

1. R. South, A Sermon Preached at Lambeth Chapel upon the Consecration of the Lord Bishop of Rochester, Nov. 25, 1666. Sermons, (3rd ed., 1704), Vol. I, p.221.

this ties the hands of subjects, though the law of nature and the general rules of Scripture had left us at liberty, which he believed they did not, because the government and peace of human society could not well subsist upon these terms; thirdly, his lordship's opinion was contrary to the declared doctrine of all Protestant churches."¹ Stillingfleet categorically declared "that our church doth not only teach them (passive obedience and non-resistance) as her own doctrines; but which is far more effectual, as the doctrines of Christ and his Apostles and of the primitive church."² It is no wonder that after the Revolution Charles Leslie was able to twit Stillingfleet on his inconsistency.

The writings of even the most popular preachers might have only a limited circulation, but the same doctrine was set forth in the most widely read of all contemporary manuals of devotion. Parallel to our duty to parents, says the author of The Whole Duty of Man, is our obligation to "the supreme magistrate," whom we must regard as "one upon whom God hath stamped much of his own power and authority, and therefore paying him all honour and esteem, never daring, upon any pretence whatsoever, to 'speak evil of the ruler of our people' (Acts xxiii,5)."³ "We owe such an obedience to the supreme power," he adds, "that whoever is authorized by him we are to submit to.....And 'tis observable that those precepts were

1. T. Birch, Life of Tillotson, (London, 1820), p.lxxiv; also cf. p.lxxxiii. Note also Burnet, History of My Own Time, (ed. by O. Airy), Vol. II, p.377f; Clarke and Porcroft, Life of Burnet, p. 268f.

2. E. Stillingfleet, Vindication of Answer to the King's Papers, p.389.

3. (Allestree), The Whole Duty of Man, (London, ed. of 1735), Sunday XIV, p.268.

given at a time when those powers were heathens, and cruel persecutors of Christianity; to shew us that no pretence of the wickedness of our rulers can free us of this duty. And obedience we must pay, either active or passive; the active in the case of all lawful commands; that is, whenever the magistrate commands something which is not contrary to some command of God, we are then bound to act according to that command of the magistrate, to do the things he requires: But when he enjoins anything contrary to what God hath commanded, we are not then to pay him this active obedience; we may, nay, we must refuse thus to act...But even this is a season for the passive obedience; we must patiently suffer what he inflicts on us for such refusal, and not to secure ourselves rise up against him....Here is very small encouragement to any to rise up against the lawful magistrate; for though they should so far prosper here, as to secure themselves from him by this means, yet there is a King of kings, from whom no power can shelter them; and this damn-¹ation in the close will prove a sad prize of their victories."

This doctrine, preached by individuals of all schools of thought, was supported by the universities with all the collective authority they possessed. In 1681 the University of Cambridge presented an address to King Charles II, and took the opportunity to set forth in uncompromising terms the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience. "We will still believe and maintain," they declared, "that our kings derive not their title from the people but from God; that

1. The Whole Duty of Man, pp.290-1.

to Him only they are accountable; that it belongs not to subjects either to create or to censure, but to honour and obey their sovereign, who comes to be so by a fundamental hereditary right of succession, which no religion, no law, no fault or forfeiture can alter or diminish."¹ Two years later, when the Exclusion Bill and the discovery of the Rye House plot had stirred public feeling to its depths, the University of Oxford published its "judgment and decree... against certain pernicious books and damnable doctrines, destructive to the sacred persons of princes."² After giving an imposing list of "points deemed destructive of civil order,"³ the members of convocation affirmed that "we decree, judge, and declare all and every of these propositions to be false, seditious and impious; and most of them to be also heretical and blasphemous, infamous to Christian religion and destructive of all government in church and state."⁴ Members of the university were forbidden to read works setting forth such doctrines, and the books themselves were ordered publicly to be burnt. Furthermore, all teachers were urged to impress upon the minds of the young "that most necessary doctrine which in a manner is the badge and character of the Church

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1. Address of the University of Cambridge to King Charles II, printed in the History of Passive Obedience, p.108.
 2. The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford, passed in their Convocation, July 31, 1683, Against Certain pernicious books and Damnable Doctrines, Destructive to the Sacred Persons of Princes, &c. (Oxford, 1683).
 3. Note particularly the insistence laid on the ninth point, about the obligation of Christians to accept passive obedience. Ibid, p.4.
 4. Ibid, p.7.

of England, of submitting to every ordinance for the Lord's sake,... teaching that this submission is to be clear, absolute, and without exception of any state or order of men."¹

It is manifest that a doctrine so generally accepted must have commended itself on grounds more solid than its appeal to a resurgent patriotism. Actually, the considerations which originally gave force to the doctrine of divine right still made it useful in Restoration England. At first it had been forged to defend the supreme political power against what seemed the excessive claims of extreme clericalists.² The threat had originally come from Rome; subsequently the Calvinists had advanced claims which, however different in form, were essentially similar in their purpose and effect. Against both these foes the leaders of Restoration England felt that there was need of constant vigilance, and the weapon which had once proved so serviceable was again furbished for the fight. The anti-pathy to nonconformists was compounded of many elements, but hatred of their political opinions was probably stronger than any other single factor. The religious claims of dissenters might be dismissed as preposterous, but what made them so dangerous was the consequences which had followed in the realm of politics. It was as rebels -- actual rebels in the past, potential rebels in the present -- that the churchmen of the Restoration feared and hated the nonconformists.

1. The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford, &c, p.3.

2. It is one of the conspicuous merits of Figgis' The Divine Right of Kings that he makes perfectly clear the motives which made the doctrine of divine right so popular a theory.

Even after the Revolution, "Jack Presbyter" was a figure whom loyal churchmen felt it necessary to watch carefully and resist wherever possible.

The fear of Roman interference was even more intense. Opposition to papal claims was a settled tradition in English public life, and much of the anti-Roman literature of the Restoration aimed to uncover the interference which the Pope would practice if he had a chance. The sermons extolling the king's inalienable rights and demanding of the subject unqualified obedience returned again and again to an exposure of the sinister designs of Rome. The Papal Tyranny as it was Exercised over England for Some Ages¹ is only one of many works which supplied the historical background; The Jesuits' Policy to Suppress Monarchy² might draw its examples from the past but even the title illustrated the nature of the fear awakened among Englishmen by the most effective of the emissaries of the Pope. The Jesuits were dreaded far more on political than on religious grounds. It was not ^{their} dogma nor even the moral basis of their methods which alarmed the English mind. They were regarded as the shameless exponents of the lawfulness of resisting princes; they acquiesced in, and even advocated tyrannicide, and they justified their policy by appealing to the sovereign power of the Pope. Throughout the Restoration period the fear of popery was

1. The author was Peter du Moulin, and the work appeared in 1674.

2. The Jesuits Policy to Suppress Monarchy Historically Displayed, London, 1669.

steadily increasing, and the apprehension to which even the ephemeral literature of the divine right to kings bears testimony found monumental expression in the work of one of the greatest English scholars of the time. Barrow's carefully reasoned Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy is unintelligible except against the background of contemporary fears. In the Preface to the Reader, Barrow confidently claims "that whosoever shall carefully peruse this treatise shall find that this point of the Pope's supremacy....is not only an indefensible but an impudent cause as ever was undertaken by learned pens." He then proceeds to prove, with the inexhaustible patience which seventeenth century learning could command, that it was indeed true that Romanism claimed "that the civil principality is subject to the sacerdotal."¹ Having established this fact, he could assert without fear of contradiction that "among modern controversies there is scarce any of greater consequence than that about universal supremacy."² Point by point Barrow then dealt with the papal claims, until, having presumably wearied the patience of all except the hardiest readers, he returned to the relation between church and state. The pope, as he pointed out, "doth pretend to be above all princes...but in the primitive times this was not held."³ Scripture, history and the evidence of common sense unite against such arrogant claims. "No power," Barrow added,

1. Barrow, Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy, Works (London, 1861) Vol. III, p.4, column 1.

2. Ibid, p.20. col.1.

3. Ibid, p.188, col.1.

can have a higher source, or firmer ground, than that of civil government hath; for 'all such power is from heaven'."¹ The full measure of Roman arrogance is proved by placing side by side the requirement of obedience and the practice sanctioned by the pope. "God by indispensible law hath obliged us to retain our obedience to the king, even pagan; chargin us, under pain of damnation to be subject to him and not to resist him. But the pope is ready upon occasion to discharge subjects from that obligation, to absolve them from their solemn oaths of allegiance, to encourage insurrection against him, to prohibit obedience."² As usual, Barrow substantiated his charge with copious quotations from Roman Catholic literature, and then closed the argument with an appeal to Holy Scripture and common sense. Few writers could bring to bear on any subject the massive learning with which Barrow attacked the papal claims, but there is nothing original in his central position. He upheld the rights of the king, and insisted on the duty of absolute obedience, and he believed that Romanism was the most dangerous obstacle to both. In this he was in complete agreement with almost all his Anglican contemporaries.³

The first signs of a major cleavage in the Church of England appear in the discussion of the origins of sovereignty. In the

1. Barrow, op.cit., p.189, col.2.

2. Ibid, p.197, col.1.

3. Cf. The True Protestant Subject, or the Nature and Rights of Sovereignty Discussed and Stated (1680), p.5.

first instance, men had been content to quote the words of Scripture, draw from them the inference that God had invested kingship with an inalienable sovereignty, and then fortify their claims with further quotations from the Bible. The method had certain manifest defects; it condemned those who used it to an intolerably tedious style of composition; it invited opponents to use the same method for their ends, and so proved inconclusive. But it made it possible to state an uncompromising position with great assurance, and buttressed the conviction that "a king (properly so called) is a supremacy of power, independent from all earthly authority."¹ Even though the king may have bound himself to observe "certain rules of administration" it is impossible to infer from this that the people's consent plays any part in establishing the monarch's right to rule. Subjects are not obliged to obey because they are parties to a compact; "they stand indispensably bound by the command of God, which exacts from them honours and obedience, even to evil kings, and expressly prohibits all manner of forcible resistance against the supreme magistrate, under any pretence whatsoever. Thus to live and thus to do is safe, commendable, and consonant to the principles of our Christian faith."²

1. The True Protestant Subject, p.25.

2. Ibid, p.27. Note the author's comment that the plea with which an "ignorant and unsteady sort of people" support the opposite view "has so much of unregeneracy in it, and so little of reason, that there's no great danger of any sober Christian's being seduced with it." Note also the claim advanced in "The Case Stated Touching the Sovereign's Prerogative and the People's Liberty, &c (1660), p.4: "In the first place it behoves the subject to take notice that the king's authority is Jure Divino, he

We have the same view of the origin of sovereignty in the most influential work on the subject published during the Restoration period, but the method of proof has been changed in an important respect. Filmer's Patriarcha was at once the ablest and the most popular defence of the extreme royalist claims, but its significance lies in the fact that its altered approach invited a more effective kind of reply. Filmer recognized that his case would be stronger if it rested on an appeal to the order of nature rather than on a catena of texts. The order of nature, of course, has been established by God, and the only reliable account of its origins is in the book of Genesis. So Filmer seized upon the fact of patriarchal authority. On Adam the fulness of sovereignty had been bestowed; from him it was lineally transmitted to his eldest son. He reinforced his argument by citing the Old Testament patriarchs, and then drew the necessary inferences regarding the abiding character of hereditary kingly rule. Whatever the form of government, its authority "is the only right and natural authority of a supreme father. There is, and always shall be continued till the end of the world, a natural right of a supreme father over every multitude."¹ "If we compare

is set over us by God Himself, he hath not his reign or crown by our favour; for says God, 'by me kings reign', and it is plainly not by us."

1. Filmer, Patriarcha (edition of 1884), p.20. Note Locke's contention that "this subjection of children being the foundation of all regal authority" is the crucial point in Filmer's work. "This position," he adds, is "the foundation of all their doctrine who would have monarchy to be jure divino." Locke, Two Treatises of Government (London, 1884), pp.111-112.

the natural rights of a father with those of a king, we find them all one, without any difference at all but only in the latitude or extent of them: as the father over one family, so the king, as father over many families, extends his care to preserve, feed, clothe, instruct and defend the whole commonwealth."¹ Others had sensed that the metaphor of fatherhood was suggestive; Filmer was the first to seize on it as the principle which could illuminate the essential nature of kingship.

The popularity of his work² proves that Filmer had given clear expression to what had vaguely been in many minds, but he had prepared his own undoing. His appeal was to "the very principles of the law of nature,"³ but it was possible for his opponents to assert that he had misconstrued those principles. Filmer had claimed that "there want not those who believe that the first invention of laws was to bridle and moderate the overgreat power of kings; but the truth is, the original of laws was for the keeping of the multitude in order."⁴ This kind of categorical statement proves nothing, and it invited opponents to retort by reaffirming their own view. This is exactly what happened. Throughout the period, the view was slowly gaining ground that sovereignty

1. Filmer, op.cit., p.21.

2. As to the popularity of Patriarcha, note Locke's frank admissions: "...a treatise that made such a noise at its coming abroad..." "the applause that followed it".... "a man who is the great champion of absolute power, and the idol of those who worship it." Two Treatises of Government, pp.77-8.

3. Filmer, op. cit., p.11.

4. Ibid, p.50.

resides, in part at least, in the people. If that is so, then kingship must rest on some sort of contractual basis, and law must be the means whereby even kings can be controlled. During most of the period, this was not a popular or influential view; but it clearly carried some weight, or the defenders of divine right would not have attacked it so often and with such vigour.¹ A growing section of the Whig party discovered that this view could both justify their political aims and commend itself to the new intellectual temper which was emerging. Moreover, the defenders of divine right had greatly simplified the task of their opponents. Filmer, as we have seen, had shifted the appeal from the words of Scripture to the law of nature; in so doing he had paved the way for a new kind of attack. As John Locke cogently proved, Filmer had not established any real identity between the law of nature and his interpretation of the story of Adam. Step by step, Locke demonstrated that even if Adam possessed the kind of sovereignty that Filmer stipulated, there was nothing to prove that he could or did transmit it in any such manner as the theory of divine right presupposed.² It was consequently possible to appeal to the law of nature for totally new ends, and Locke initiated a movement in political thought which finally found full expression in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

1. As an example, note the comment of the author of The True Protestant Subject (1680), p.23: "There are another sort of these creatures that will needs have the supreme authority to be originally in the people, to whom they make the prince to stand obliged for it, as being their proper gift. But this assertion is notoriously untrue..."

2. Locke, Two Treatises of Government, Chapters III to VI.

However great the theoretical interest of the debate may have been, political considerations rapidly lifted it to a different plane and made it a matter of immediate practical concern. The attempt to pass the Exclusion Bill brought the whole issue into the forefront of men's thinking; it accentuated existing differences, and prepared for the sudden overthrow of a theory which to all appearances had established an impregnable position. The minds of Englishmen had been deeply disturbed by the conversion of the Duke of York to Romanism, and the course of events did nothing to allay the apprehensions of those who regarded with horror the prospect of a popish king upon the throne. The apologists of divine right found their belief in passive obedience increasingly difficult to commend to others; to urge their contemporaries to accept suffering, with prayers and tears but without repining, was to offer hard doctrine. Many were not ready to accept it. In the activities of the Whigs they found a political lead; in works like Johnson's Julian the Apostate they received a vigorous statement of an alternative position. Those who uncritically supported the heir apparent were, according to Johnson, adjusting "the doctrine of passive obedience for the use of a popish successor;" they would end by making their countrymen "an easier prey to the bloody Papists."¹ The purpose of his appeal to the past was both to emphasize the nature of the impending danger and to justify resistance to it. Pope Gregory had pointed out "that Julian stole a persecution upon the Christians under a shadow

1. (Samuel Johnson), Julian the Apostate, being a short account of his Life, the Sense of the Primitive Christians about his Succession, and Their Behaviour Towards Him. (London, 1682), p.89.

of gentleness, for he always disclaimed his being a persecutor'. And we, for ought I know, may be exposed to the bloodiest persecution that ever was, under the meek pretences of passive obedience."¹ The argument is both bold and simple. The danger is real and immanent; popery is no imaginary threat; once it becomes a reality, there will only be two alternatives before the Protestants of England: they can apostasize or be wiped out.² Faced with this prospect, the attitude of those who urge passive obedience is absurd.³ Their appeal to Scripture will not abide scrutiny,⁴ and their claim that history supports them can be disproved by citing the Christian attitude to Julian the Apostate.⁵ The Fathers of the early church had no such belief in the law of inheritance as their present day successors imagine; if that be so, the obligation of passive obedience is left suspended in mid-air. The fatal consequences of non-resistance are evident to the simplest intelligence,⁶ and its principles run counter to indefeasible human rights -- the right of a man "to live and resist murder (even his own) upon all occasions."⁷ Present

1. Johnson, op.cit., p.88.

2. Ibid, pp.78-9.

3. Ibid, Preface to the Reader, pp.iv-v.

4. Ibid, Preface to the Reader, p.viii.

5. Ibid, passim, esp. p.93f.

6. Cf. ibid, p.viii: "...the doctrine of passive obedience, which when it is taught without any regard to laws, and is prescribed both without law and against law, is not evangelical but Mahumetane, and the very Turkish doctrine of the bow-string."

7. Ibid, p.92.

throughout the book, and giving incisiveness to Johnson's fiercest attacks, is a deep hatred of popery¹ and an intense belief that it is indistinguishable from sheer paganism.²

The discontent reflected in Julian appeared in much more striking form in the Rye House Plot and its sequel. The literature inspired by the executions of Lord Russell and Algernon Sydney gave further expression to the rising dissatisfaction with current political theories, but did nothing to enhance the reputation of the alternative view. Many people had found Julian a shocking work³, and apparently its subversive doctrines had promptly inspired rebellion. Consequently, when George Hickes replied to Johnson in Jovian, he carried public sympathy with him. The appeal to history, as he showed, can furnish more than one verdict. The law of hereditary succession is the "fundamental law of monarchy,"⁴ and any attempt to interfere with its operation is "opposition to the will of God." With uncompromising vigour, Hickes set forth the most absolute view of the unlimited powers of kings,⁵ and drew from

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1. Cf. p.91. In speaking of papal claims, Johnson asks "where is it said in the word of the Lord...that the world is only made for banditti?"
 2. Ibid, pp.99f. The polytheism, idolatry, and cruelty of both are affirmed and abundantly illustrated.
 3. Cf. the reference in (Bartholomew Shower), The Antidote Against Poison (1683). p.5, to "that venomous book, Julian".
 4. Hickes, Jovian (1683), Preface.
 5. Ibid, p.212: "He hath none to share with him in the sovereignty, but all authority and power is derived from him like light from the sun;...
(continued on p.215)

thence the most rigorous inferences as to the duty of passive obedience.¹ Behind the express injunctions of the Gospel, Hickes found the authority of "the common laws of sovereignty;" these require "passive obedience, which is but another name for non-resistance; these laws are in eternal force against the subject in defence of the sovereign, be he good or evil, just or unjust, Christian or pagan; be he what he will, no subject or number of subjects can lift up his hand against his sovereign, and be guiltless by these laws."² But lest this should seem a counsel of despair when faced with the rising threat of persecution, Hickes insisted that Englishmen were in no real danger at all.³ The first defence is "the watchful providence of God;" the second and third are the conscience and honour of the prince himself. No king of England would be willing to suffer in the eyes of his contemporaries and at the bar of history by taking any steps that would brand him as a persecutor. Further there is the protection afforded by the laws of the realm. A popish successor could not oppress his subjects even if he wished because the laws would frustrate his endeavours. "Wherefore a popish prince, though he were never so blood-thirsty and had never so little regard to humanity and his coronation oath, would be infinitely puzzled to persecute his Protestant subjects."⁴ Hickes was manifestly weakening

...he hath no sharers or co-partners with him in the sovereignty; none co-ordinate with him in government; no equal nor superior, but only God, to whom alone he is subject."

1. Hickes, op.cit., Chapter X, p.199f.

2. Ibid, p.203.

3. Chapter XII, p.265f.

4. Ibid, p.273.

his theoretical argument by these appeals to contingent circumstances, but his fatal concession was his claim that to any one acquainted with the future James II, the whole discussion could only seem entirely irrelevant. Those who pointed to dangers ahead were unprincipled agitators, and their arguments bore "no relation to the expectations those entertain who really know the Duke of York."¹

As soon as the Duke of York became the King of England, he promptly proved how unwarranted had been the confidence of men like Hickes. His initial declaration might be reassuring to nervous Anglicans, but his deeds soon belied his words. His conduct during his brief reign precipitated the crisis which ended in his downfall and in the overthrow of the theory which had served as the buttress of his throne. The supporters of absolute royal supremacy had laboured hard to prove that neither heresy nor apostasy could invalidate a king's claim to the subject's loyalty.² To argue from harsh and oppressive methods of government was beside the point.³ Hickes had categorically stated that "in all sovereign governments subjects must be slaves as to this particular: they must trust their lives and liberties with their

1. Hickes, op.cit., p.203.

2. Cf. The True Protestant Subject, p.39, where the author proves to his satisfaction that "civil authority may fall upon those who are wholly unworthy of it, and neither incapacity nor irreligion annihilates a prince's right to the crown." Cf. also the claim of The Case Stated Touching the Sovereign's Prerogative and the People's Liberty, p.4: "It is the plain witness of Scripture that were he never so wicked, he is not to be dealt with according to his deservings."

3. Cf. Seth Ward, Against Resistance of Lawful Powers, pp.29-30.

sovereigns."¹ To James this was the true voice of the Church of England, and he assumed that loyal Anglicans would be bound to acquiesce in whatever he might choose to do. This is proved by his attitude to Bishop Ken;² it speaks clearly in the vehemence with which he brushed aside the opposition of the fellows of Magdalen;³ it explains his anger when confronted with the resistance of the seven bishops.⁴ The full implications of the increasing opposition to James were not immediately apparent. Even those who felt that they could no longer acquiesce in the royal policy did not see what the ultimate end would be, and James certainly failed to recognize the delicate equipoise of the doctrine of passive obedience. Hickes himself had conceded that subjects might use all lawful means to reclaim their sovereign from misguided ways, but when some refuse cooperation others are sure actively to resist. At all events, every contemporary observer records enough to make it plain that anyone except a headstrong fool would have realized that there were limits to the constraint which passive obedience could lay upon the impatience of an

1. Hickes, Jovian, p.242. Note also The Case Stated, &c, p.5: "Princes are like the bond of wedlock, once make them the fathers of our country, and we take them for better, for worse; we may persuade them, we cannot compel them without breach of divine precepts; once let them be the Lord's annointed, and it is sacrilege to touch them, I mean unfittingly." Note also the tenor of the sermon (on I Tim. ii,1) preached by Bishop Turner at the coronation of James II, April 23, 1685.
2. Plumptre, Life of Ken (2nd ed., 1890), Vol.I, p.286f.
3. Anthony à Wood, Life, pp.361-3; Bramston, Autobiography, p.285; The Hatton Correspondence, (Camden Soc., 1878), Vol.II, p.73f.
4. Plumptre, op.cit., Vol.I, p.307: "This is a standard of rebellion...I am king; I will be obeyed. Is this your Church of England loyalty?"

awakened people. Actually James II had been warned; some years before Bishop Morley had assured him that in an emergency he could not count on the acquiescence which passive obedience seemed to promise.¹ The debate rapidly passed out of the region in which theories could control events. James lost his throne, and developments in the new reign soon forced the clergy to reconsider the doctrine which they had for so long accepted as the "distinguishing badge of the Church of England."

With new rulers on the throne, the question of appropriate oaths at once arose. Certain concessions were made to Tory scruples in the matter, but it was immediately apparent that those who had upheld the divine right of kings were faced with a most difficult decision.² The great majority salved their consciences as best they could, took the required oaths, and tacitly abandoned the political theories they had held. Many were not convinced that William's claim to the throne was actually valid, but they acquiesced in his de facto possession of it. Bramston, after much searching of heart, concluded that whatever might be said of those who invited him William had been justified in coming to seize the throne of England; James II might have a right to his subjects' allegiance if he ever returned to claim it, but meanwhile sound government was necessary, and obedience to those actually in power was the only condition on which it could be had.³

1. Morley, from his death-bed, sent word to James, through Lord Dartmouth, that "if ever he depended on the doctrine of non-resistance he would find himself deceived. The clergy might not think proper to contradict that doctrine in terms, but he was very sure they would in practice." Cf. Plumptre, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.298.

2. Cf. The Hatton Correspondence, Vol.II, p.99.

3. Bramston, Autobiography (Camden Soc., 1845), p.355.

Bohun found comfort in conceding that William had the rights belonging to a conqueror; in addition he had certain claims of his own, and even stronger ones through his wife.¹ Such concessions were often the result of much anxious thought. In a letter dated May 15, 1689, William Nicolson reveals clearly enough the embarrassment felt by many Englishmen. "We have now a Prince and Princess seated on the throne, in whom we are ready enough to acknowledge all the accomplishments we can wish for in our governors, provided their present possession of the crown were unquestionable; and therefore, methinks we should rather greedily catch at any appearance of proof that may justify their pretensions than dwell on such arguments as seemingly overturn them."² Throughout the early months of the new reign, anxious clergymen were searching for some formula that would satisfy their consciences and allow them to pursue their vocation, and well-wishers were lavish with advice. Some of it, like the blundering efforts of Burnet to satisfy the mind of Ken,³ did more harm than good, but most of the clergy found a measure of reassurance by dwelling on the demands of the existing situation and ignoring questions of abstract theory.

The inconspicuous clergyman could now be grateful for his obscurity, but certain leaders of the Church had been such prominent advocates of passive obedience that some defence of their dramatic

1. Ed. Bohun, Non-Resistance or Passive Obedience noway Concerned in the Controversies Now Depending.

2. Nicolson, Epistolary Correspondence, Vol. I, pp.7-8.

3. Cf. Clarke and Foxcroft, Life of Burnet, p.301. Also Plumptre, op.cit., Vol.II, p.46f.

change was obviously necessary. Burnet's Pastoral Letter was an emphatic but infelicitous justification of taking the new oaths,¹ and it chiefly appealed to two considerations: James II, having fatally weakened his position at every possible point, had forfeited his rights by "abdication", while William, both by conquest and possession, was now entitled to the loyalty of Englishmen.² A more serious statement of the case for acquiescence was Stillingfleet's Discourse Concerning the Unreasonableness of a New Separation.³ Schism, he claimed, could not be justified "when the difference is only upon the account of a case of conscience, wherein wise and good men may easily differ," and those who had been so quick to denounce the scruples of nonconformists should be reluctant to force a division when they found themselves dissatisfied.⁴ He regarded the question of the oaths as the crux of the whole matter; if those who object to them have any case at all, "it must either be from the continuing obligation of the former oaths, or from the nature of the present oaths."⁵ It was consequently necessary to examine the nature of oaths

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1. Note that Burnet's Pastoral Letter on the new oaths aroused such bitter feeling that it was ordered by Parliament to be burnt. Cf. Lathbury, A History of the Nonjurors, pp.72-5.
 2. Note Reresby's account of Burnet's vehement way of asserting William's rights to the throne, The Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, p.431.
 3. A Discourse Concerning the Unreasonableness of a New Separation, on account of the Oaths, with an Answer to the History of Passive Obedience, so far as relates to them. London, 1689.
 4. Ibid, p.1. Cf. p.3: "I separation from our Church become a duty with those who so lately looked on it as so great a fault in others?"
 5. Ibid, p.3.

in general, and Stillingfleet proved -- at least to his own satisfaction -- that political oaths are essentially different from those which bind individuals to one another. All obligation in society is conditioned by the "common good" of the nation as a whole, and magistrates, who often impose oaths for their own security, have no right to use them as an obstacle to public welfare. "Therefore....how strict soever the expressions may be, if the keeping of the oath be really and truly inconsistent with the welfare of a people, in subverting the fundamental laws which support it, I do not see how such an oath continues to oblige. For there is no relation of mankind to one another, but there is some good antecedent, which is the just measure of that obligation they stand in to each other."¹ This position is then developed at length, and finally applied to the case of "the present oaths." Stillingfleet claimed that he was not asserting the lawfulness of resistance; the central issue, he believed, was clear and simple: "whether the law of our nation doth not bind us to allegiance to a king and queen in actual possession of the throne, by consent of the three estates of the realm."² He dismissed the theoretical arguments of his opponents as either irrelevant or opposed to the fundamental position he had already established. Those who were ill at ease about their oaths to James II, must realize that "the interests of the common

1. Stillingfleet, op.cit., p.5.

2. Ibid, p.9. One of the strongest statements of this particular argument occurs in The Case of Allegiance in our Present Circumstances Consider'd, In a Letter from a Minister in the City to a Minister in the Country. (London, 1689), pp.22-4.

good" outweigh the claims of any individual, and both the evidence of English history and the clear witness of Scripture confirm the point.¹ To give way to recrimination only confuses the issue: "as to the dreadful charge of perjury and apostasy, which some, of much greater heat than judgment have made use of against those who hold it lawful to take the oaths, if what I have said be true, it is little less than ridiculous."²

Stillingfleet's defection might create concern, but it was Sherlock who aroused the most bitter resentment among the defenders of the old position. Circumstances made his acceptance particularly hard to accept,³ and it was only natural for Sherlock to try to defend his actions. With unusual distinctness, his work⁴ reflects the disturbed conditions of the time. All the familiar arguments of the conformists are there, but so is an illuminating confession of the difficulties of seeing what is the right course, and an ardent defence of his sincerity throughout. "I prayed heartily to God, that if I were in a mistake, he would let me see it; that I might not forfeit the exercise of my ministry; and I thank God I have received that satisfaction I desired."⁵ The more scurrilous among his foes were quick

1. Stillingfleet, op.cit., pl3f. and p.34f.

2. Ibid, p.41.

3. After consistently denying the lawfulness of the oaths, Sherlock suddenly conformed, and was at once promoted to the Deanery of St.Paul's. Such "apostasy" invited abuse, and one of the commonest charges was that his wife had coerced him into conforming.

4. Sherlock, The Case of the Allegiance Due to Sovereign Powers, 1691.

5. Ibid, Preface, p.iii.

to suggest that the desired satisfaction was more substantial than mere peace of mind,¹ but Sherlock also had a word for those who were so eager to defame their brethren. In "an age of great profaneness and infidelity," anything that discredited the clergy and brought their sincerity into disrepute was harmful to religion. The enemies of the church had been making the most of the acquiescent attitude of Anglicans; those who felt obliged to take the oaths must defend their position (as he was doing); those whom conscience compelled to dissent should exercise forbearance.

Events had conspired to overthrow the theory of divine indefeasible hereditary right; with it fell the doctrine of passive obedience. Practical men, living in the present and facing the future, acknowledged the fact, and changed the political theories they held. But some were content to live in the past, and the Nonjurors have all the forlorn attractiveness of men committed to lost causes. The smallness of their numbers proves that their favourite doctrine had outlived its power to command assent, but it is significant that they could force the only High Church schism in the history of the Church of England. They included some of the most saintly and many of the most learned churchmen of their time, but the world they live in

1. Note, however, the charitable allowances made by some of the Nonjurors: "Some there were who could not be brought to transfer their allegiance from him to another, by invocation of God's name: but who now, upon second thoughts, considering the desperate state of his affairs, were willing to be convinced, that both their interest and duty might be made to go together, and that a right of providential possession ought no longer to be disputed by them." Kettlewell's Life, p.112.

•had passed away. The doctrine they defended had been fashioned to meet a need that no longer existed, and though men might yield them the respect usually conceded to misguided sanctity, they could only influence their own day in minor ways. To the very end they upheld the rightness of their cause.¹ Some, like Sancroft, maintained their distinctive witness without loss of charity; "notwithstanding he and they (the conformists) might go different ways with respect to public affairs, he trusted yet that heaven-gates would be wide enough to receive both him and them."² Many, however, lapsed into bitterness, and Granville's letters from Saint-germain breathe a spirit that for years infected English life.³ The leaven of non-juring rancour undermined the morale of the loyalist Tories and brought the whole party into disrepute.⁴ The recurrent cry that the church was in danger gained added force from the witness of the Nonjurors, and aggravated the unrest of English public life. From

1. Cf. A Defence of the Profession which the Right Reverend Father in God John, late Lord Bishop of Chichester, made upon his death-bed: Concerning Passive Obedience and the new Oaths (1690), pp.7-8: "...And whereas that religion of the Church of England taught me the doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience, which I have accordingly inculcated upon others, and which I took to be the distinguishing character of the Church of England, I adhere no less firmly and steadfastly to that, and in consequence of it have incurred a suspension from the exercise of my office and expected a deprivation. I find in so doing much inward satisfaction...."

2. Kettlewell, Life, p.159.

4. Cf. Feiling, op.cit., p.294.

3. Cf. the illuminating series of letters given in The Remains of Dennis Granville (Surtees Soc., 1860, 1865). His letter of Mar.19, '87/8 gives one of the most extreme statements of the doctrine of passive obedience (Vol. II, p.228f); a series of letters to the bishop, clergy, &c of Durham (Vol.I, pp.97-117) contrasts his fidelity to Church of England principles with their apostasy, and reflects the naivete and lack of realism of the extreme Nonjuror. Note also his bitter letter to Beveridge (July, '92), Vol. II, p.235f.

time to time they robbed the church of the services of a high-minded and conscientious man like William Law, but gradually they lost both in influence and in numbers. Like the Jacobites, they dwelt, with nostalgic ineffectiveness, on a situation which had passed away. In an age increasingly governed by prudence and common sense, they witnessed to convictions which some might still respect but which very few were willing to accept. Meanwhile the Church of England stood on the threshold of the eighteenth century. Instead of the high-flown fervours of divine right and passive obedience, bishops now commended both by precept and example that complacent erastianism which reached its full development in Walpole's England.

Seldom has a doctrine suffered such sudden and complete eclipse. Up till the very eve of the Revolution the vast majority of Anglicans accepted divine right and passive obedience as mandatory teachings of the church. Some might try to modify the rigours of one or the other theory; a very few might call both in question, but together they represented the political theory most commonly held throughout the Restoration period. Then, under the impact of events, they disappeared at once and forever. They might linger on, a forlorn survival, in small groups and unimportant circles, but essentially the overthrow of divine right supplies the most striking example of a dramatic change that can be found anywhere in the history of English thought. What explains a reversal so complete?

The theory is intelligible only in the light of the purposes it was designed to serve. The practical ends could now be secured in other ways; since the theory itself had grown obsolete, only the pressure of events was necessary to discredit it forever.

We have already seen that the divine right of kings was a bulwark against the intrusion of extreme forms of clericalism. The original threat to the autonomy of national sovereignty had come from Rome, but in time the new Calvinism from Geneva advanced political claims which were essentially of the same nature. Against both of these, the theory of divine right supplied a useful weapon of defence, and since both were still a threat in 1660, the doctrine retained its ancient appeal. But in the course of the next thirty years conditions changed. Events proved that the aggressions of Rome could be met without appealing to the theory of divine right. Actually, the reign of James II had shown that in a crisis the theory -- with its concomitant emphasis on passive obedience -- could abet rather than control the advances of Romanism. It appeared that popery and the claims of divine right were no longer counterbalancing forces, and in their momentary union they were repudiated together. With regard to Puritanism, an opposite development produced a similar result. With the passing of a generation, the political threat from nonconformity seemed much less serious than it had on the morrow of the Great Rebellion. Granville might frantically appeal to the danger

from Puritanism and point to symptoms which recalled 1642,¹ but no one paid much attention to his warnings. The political forces of Puritanism could be contained in other ways; indeed, once the dissenters had proved that they had a share in the equipoise of the nascent party system, it was even safe to grant them toleration. In fact, the dangers of clerical interference were over; in so far as they still existed they could now be met in ways more satisfactory than an appeal to the divine right of kings.

In other important respects the theory had discharged its special functions and could safely be forgotten. Throughout the seventeenth century it had borne consistent witness to the need of continuity in the national life. An age appalled at the results of political disorder was glad to welcome any influence which would strengthen the law-abiding habits of the people. So the divine right of kings gave a rationale to the move to restore the monarchy; it also curbed the turbulent forces which might have threatened the new regime. This explains the fervent denunciations of resistance which the theory inspired; it also illuminates the delicate weighing of the threat of persecution against the danger of disturbing the succession which formed so marked a feature of the Exclusion Bill debates.² But the Revolution proved conclusively that law and order were now strongly established in English public life. Political

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1. The Remains of Dennis Granville (Surtees Soc.), Vol. I, p.33f.
 2. Cf. Journals of the House of Lords, Vol.XII, p.648f; A. Grey, Debates of the House of Commons, 1667 to 1694, Vol. VIII, p.21f; Foxcroft, Life of Halifax, Vol.I, p.253f.

rebellion could only succeed when given the overwhelming support of the most influential elements in the community; once it had that sanction, it could take place with a regulated propriety which has few parallels in history. Even the "myths" of the Revolution -- such as the fiction of the abdication of King James -- served to emphasize continuity and order. A major political adjustment could now be made, not with the help of passive obedience but against its protests. As a stabilizing force in the community it had manifestly outlived its usefulness.

The theoretical foundations of the doctrine had also crumbled. The mode of thinking on which it rested had largely been superceded. It belonged to an age when theology and political theory were intimately -- indeed inseparably -- interwoven. That day had passed. In demolishing Filmer's arguments, Locke might still appeal to the authority of religious truth, but the fact remains that between them they had altered the general character of the discussion. The law of nature began to supercede the words of Scripture; in the first instance the natural law might be established by the will of God,¹ but it was an easy step for the next generation to proclaim its autonomy. Already the burden of proof has shifted to those who

1. Cf. A Brief History of the Succession of the Crown of England (1688/9) (Harleian Miscellany (1744), Vol.I, p.448f) : "That government is of nature, and derived from God, is manifest. Nothing is more natural in man, than the desire of society, and without government society would be intolerable."

would control political forms by an appeal to Biblical statements. The inferences to be drawn from natural law must be accepted unless unequivocal Scriptural proof can be produced to the contrary,¹ and in time even this proviso was abandoned.

A new spirit was making itself felt in the discussion of political theory; with this spirit the claims of divine right were incompatible. A city minister, writing in 1689 to enlighten a country colleague about the facts of the new day, denounced the servile attitude which had infected English political thought. Certain principles, he remarked, had been "too earnestly obtruded and too easily entertained amongst us," but if they "rather enslave than oblige our consciences, and are as inconsistent with truth as they are with the present revolution, we must take the honest courage to break off those bands, and assert our liberty."² Foremost among these constricting views he mentioned the theory "that a monarchial form of government and the appropriation of it to a particular person or family is jure divino." None, he said, denies the existence of a permissive right, but there is no evidence to support the kind of theory which has till lately been so confidently advanced. The prevalent conception of monarchy was, it is clear, undergoing a serious change. It was still confidently affirmed that political order was of divine establishment, but the forms under which it was organized might vary widely and should be left to the constitut-

1. Harleian Miscellany, Vol.I, p.460 (A Brief History of the Succession, &c)

2. The Case of Allegiance in our Present Circumstances Consider'd, In a Letter from a Minister in the City to a Minister in the Country (1689), p.3f.

ional requirements of each time and place.¹ In some countries, monarchy might suit the people's needs; in others, a republic might be more appropriate. Even granting that England was accustomed to the rule of kings, it did not follow that their power is "absolute and unlimited." Only the folly or ill-will of sychopants would accept a theory so completely at variance with the facts of English history. If, remarked the author of The Case of Allegiance, there were any validity in the claims of divine right, absolute monarchy might be able to establish a case; as it is, any careful student can recognize that the "mixed form of government" which prevails in England has arisen out of English conditions and the circumstances of English history. At no time have the people conceded absolute power to their kings; a system of balanced rights has always been the mark of English political life. Whether this represents a correct reading of history or not is beside the point; the important fact is that royal absolutism is challenged in the name of parliament and the people. The constitutionalism of "a minister in the City" is a far cry from the almost servile prostration of Granville before the King's majesty, but Granville belonged to the past; the new conception of monarchy had all the forces of the future on its side; and it was frankly and explicitly hostile to the theory of divine right.

It was inevitable that the old views should be called in question. The new reliance on reason -- so pronounced a feature of later seventeenth century thought -- made men's minds sensitive to the extravagant character of the theories which had been so widely held. A sober and

1. The Case of Allegiance, &c, pp.6-7.

moderate appeal to history and to common sense is the mark of most of the pamphlets which defend the Revolution settlement; it was more acceptable to men who had been reading Locke or Newton than the uncompromising dogmatism of the champions of divine right. The revolt against authority also played its part. When reason sat in judgment on every kind of sweeping claim, what chance of survival had the intransigence of divine right?

Gradually the foundations had worn away; on the eve of the Revolution men still trusted in the theory and did not guess how insecure it had become. Then the discipline of events suddenly revealed to churchmen the true nature of the existing situation. The house of their security collapsed; almost overnight it became a ruin, cherished only by those who love to linger in the past. Yet in the days of its usefulness it had rendered notable services to English life and thought. Behind its defences the autonomy of national institutions had been fostered until they were unassailable by any outward foe. Under its tutelage a law-abiding habit had become the settled characteristic of the English people. It can even be claimed that by a curious paradox it prepared the way for freedom of thought and made religious toleration possible.

CHAPTER NINE. PERSECUTION AND TOLERATION:

I. WHY A POLICY OF PERSECUTION WAS ADOPTED.

Religious toleration is usually treated as though it were an abstract theory, but its growth and progress can best be judged in the actual relationships of social and political life. During the Restoration era, the subject was intermittently discussed, and toward the end of the century one of the classic treatises on toleration appeared, but it was in the school of practical affairs that men really learned the need of toleration. They began with a well-nigh universal assumption that it was inexpedient -- if not immoral -- to sanction variant forms of religious life. Experience taught them that it was wise as well as necessary to recognise the dissenter's right to a place in the community. This represents a profound change in the thought of English Christians, and it was none the less important because they learned it, not in theoretical discussion, but through the discipline of events.

The Restoration found the Presbyterians in possession of political and religious power, and it was largely because of their attitude that the king had been able to return virtually unopposed.¹

1. cf. the Queen Dowager to Lord Albany: "My lord, I hear you say the King is to England, and that you are glad there is such a way laid open for him. Do not you know that the Presbyterians are those that are to invite him?" Thurloe, Vol.VII,p.892. Also, Sir W. Killigrew to Charles II: "...the Presbyterians, who now call you in, when all other interests have failed to do it." Ibid,p.889. cf. also Cal.Clar.St.P.,Vol.III,p.212; Bramston,Autobiography,p.117; Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol.I,p.154; Harris, Memoir of Manton, p.14; Lord Crewe, quoted by Pepys, Dec.24,1662, Diary, Vol.II, p.422.

By helping to restore the monarchy, they had amassed considerable political credit; moreover, their ministers filled many of the pulpits and occupied many of the rectory houses of the land.¹ This determined at the outset the nature of the problem which faced the restored church. Its leaders came back in no mood for concessions, and the completeness of their triumph soon made it clear that none were necessary. They demanded full possession and national uniformity, and this raised the question of how to treat the Presbyterians -- these men who felt that merit and possession deserved a measure of consideration.

Comprehension, then, became a live issue at the very start of our period; it remained so, in one form or another, until practically the end. At the outset it was not the nonconformists only who insisted that some form of reconciliation was possible. When the extent of Presbyterian power was still uncertain, there were Anglicans ready to hint that the two parties might well unite. The Presbyterians need not lose their churches, nor would their ordination be called in question. Suffering, they said, had taught the Episcopalians the folly of harbouring bitter thoughts against their brothers; they were ready to forgive and be done with malice for ever.² Many, however, drew quite dif-

1. Burnet, op.cit., Vol.I, p.316.

2. White Kennet, Register, p.121. cf. also Burnet, op.cit., Vol.I, p. 159.

ferent lessons from adversity, and soon the pleas for comprehension were coming from the other side. The Presbyterians, having abandoned the hope of establishment, realized that they could not even claim inclusion as their right. They could not demand it, but it might be granted them as a concession. Here they were given considerable ground for hope. At a famous meeting at Worcester House, Charles II made a declaration which seemed to the Presbyterians to promise a satisfactory form of comprehension. At Sion House, also in 1660, there was held the first of a series of fruitless conferences between Presbyterians and Episcopalians. The discussion covered a wide area, but the crux of the matter was the Presbyterian offer -- repeatedly put forward at this period -- to accept a modified episcopacy. It was not originally their own suggestion; they could quote Ussher's "Model" as their authority.¹ The plan called for a union based on certain concessions on the part of the bishops. They would abandon their claims jure divino, and accept a status equivalent in effect to that of presidents of synods. Moreover, Ussher's scheme, by providing for the division of dioceses and the creation of suffragan bishops, met many of the objections to the practical working of episcopacy.

1. Ussher's Model satisfied the scruples of the Puritans, and Baxter tells us that when certain prominent Anglicans came to him to learn the substance of what he and Ussher had originally agreed upon, they left completely satisfied.

The strength of the scheme lay in the prospect it held forth of a union of the moderates of both sides in a church which would be free from those elements of Laudian episcopacy which many Anglicans hoped had disappeared forever. A comprehension of this kind would have drawn into the established church so large a proportion of English Protestants that nonconformity might well have been limited to the sects, which would have discredited themselves by their excesses and so have dwindled¹ into insignificance.

The initial attempts to secure comprehension failed. No other result was remotely possible. The various conferences, indeed, pursued their intricate and wearisome way, but the details are irrelevant because the primary condition of success was absent. The dominant party in the Church of England were in no mood for concessions, and saw no need of them. They had secured all they wanted -- more than they could well have hoped for -- and comprehension would only mean unnecessary sacrifices. The Presbyterian interest was manifestly waning. In every department of national life they were weaker in 1661 than they had² been a year before. It is true that many of the episcopal leaders were seriously concerned about religious unity. Cosin

1. cf. the suggestion in Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II, Vol.I, p.214.

2. Stoughton, Religion in England, Vol.III, p.160.

could write in his will that "I take it to be my duty, and that of all bishops, and ministers of the Church, to do our utmost endeavour, that at last an end may be put to the differences of religion, or at least that they may be lessened."¹ Nevertheless it was not along such lines as comprehension that Cosin and his associates were looking for the solution of these problems. Nothing emerges so clearly from contemporary records as the fact that throughout the earlier negotiations the leaders of the Church of England were discussing an utterly remote contingency. They talked about comprehension, but they did not expect it to materialise. This was the underlying assumption, for example of the men responsible for revising the Book of Common Prayer in 1662. In all the discussions of the period, the Church leaders threw every possible obstacle in the way of the nonconformists who were willing to adopt a modified form of episcopacy. They themselves had asked for -- and received -- an exclusive establishment. Any one who shared their benefits must do so on their terms. They naturally looked for a solution to the problem of nonconformity, but they did not expect to find it in comprehension. They looked, instead, for submission, and the story of the persecution of the Dissenters is the record of their attempt to secure in their own way what the advocates of comprehension also sought.

1. I. Basire, Life of Cosin, p.89

The hope of comprehension determined the character of Presbyterian life and policy for many years to come; it had to survive innumerable discouragements and it remained alive only because the Church of England from time to time revived it. In 1667, after the fall of Clarendon, Sir Robert Aikins prepared a Bill of Comprehension;¹ it was neither printed nor introduced into parliament, but it paved the way for a further attempt in the following year. In January 1668, the indefatigable Mr. Pepys was already aware that something was afoot,^x and his informants thought the new measure would probably pass. It had influential support,² and Bishop Wilkins entered into negotiations with Baxter, Manton, and Bates. Bishop Barlow was also active, but the opponents within the Church of England were too strong, and the temper of parliament was too disturbed, for the measure to have any prospect of success.

Four years later the question arose again, and it determined the attitude of the Presbyterians to the Declaration of Indulgence. They wanted comprehension -- "any tolerable state of unity with the public ministry" -- and they believed that an indulgence would defeat their ends. It might grant a momentary respite, but it would also open the way for the advance of popery.

1. cf. the account of it by Bishop Barlow in Thorndike's Works, Vol.V, p.302f.

x. Pepys, Diary, Jan. 20 and 30, 1668; also Feb.5, 1668

2. e.g., Bridgman and Hale. For the King's attitude, see Burnet, op.cit., I, p.445. cf. also Harris, Memoir of Thomas Manton, p.xx.

Comprehension, they believed, would unite the Protestant forces; a toleration would only keep them apart, and, faced with the Roman Catholic menace, they could not afford to be divided. It was not long before the same considerations appealed to members of the Church of England. Early in 1673, the possibility of comprehension was raised with Baxter by the Earl of Orrery, and he mentioned prominent figures who were ready to support a measure of this kind.¹ Tillotson and Stillingfleet proposed a conference with Baxter and Manton.² As usual, questions and answers, statements and rejoinders, passed to and fro, and Baxter faithfully gives us the gist of the negotiations.³ By 1675 it was apparent that once again the matter would come to nothing. In this way the question dragged on throughout the period. In 1689 the issue re-emerged, for the last time, but the fate of the Comprehension Bill proved that the hopes of neither side would be achieved. The Presbyterians could not secure inclusion; neither, on the other hand, could the stricter Anglicans enforce unity on their own terms. As so often happens in a compromise, the toleration which marked the end of the period was a disappointment to both parties.

Of the various possible methods of dealing with Dissenters, comprehension was the first that claimed consideration. Though re-

1. The Lord Treasurer (Danby); also Bishop Morley.

2. For the attitude of a liberal churchman, cf. Account of the Life of S. Patrick, p.208

3. Baxter, Life and Times, Vol.III, p.109f.

vived from time to time, it was never widely popular, and the alternative policy of repression carried the day because it appealed in so many ways to those responsible for the conduct of affairs. The attitude of the King was important but never decisive. While still in Holland, he had issued a declaration famous in the religious history of his reign, but he adroitly made the proffered "liberty to tender consciences" contingent on parliamentary approval. It represented no settled conviction on Charles' part, and his native disposition was of a kind to keep him from entangling himself unduly in the difficulties of religious debate. "Those things which concern matters of religion," he said to the members of his first parliament, "I confess to you, are too hard for me, and therefore I do commend¹ them to your care and deliberation." He was deeply concerned about national unity, and probably felt that persecution did not increase it. His political adroitness made him quick to see the advantages of cultivating any group that would offset the fervently Anglican party in parliament, and the dissenters might prove useful.² His foreign policy, re-inforced by personal inclination, made him anxious to secure relief for Roman Catholics. At the same time, he had a genuine dislike of oppressive measures in religious affairs. "It was always a particular maxim of his royal majesty, that force was the worst and most improper remedy

1. Speech from the throne, 1661.

2. Every one is agreed that Charles' protestantism was never more than nominal. Buckingham said he was a Deist. He himself protested to Burnet that he was not an atheist, and he evidently respected the authoritative traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. "The ministrations of its priests," says Mr. Ogg, "appeared to provide a spiritual hygiene suitable to a temperament like his." (Op. cit., I, p.149)

that could be used to preserve the peace of the Church; that divisions were never to be healed by wars and forfeitures but by treaties and conferences; that he should therefore follow the bent of his own natural temper, and not suffer himself to be biased by the malignity and mistaken zeal of other men.¹"

The court party were delighted that Charles had given promises at Breda which threw the responsibility on others, and this continued to be the settled attitude of those about the king.² The Earl of Clarendon, however, is too important to be classified with the ordinary courtier, and the extent of his influence made it natural to settle on him the responsibility for the policies which were actually adopted. Up to a point the dissenters were justified in blaming him for the character of the religious settlement. One of Clarendon's defects was a lack of sympathy with those who differed from him, and this failing showed most clearly in his dealings with the nonconformists. In part this was a failing of imagination, but it was also due to the way in which he conceived of religion. He regarded it primarily as a social force which helped to keep the subject in his proper place, and he could not grasp the strength of the religious experience which made the dissenters approach the question in a spirit so completely different from his own. It was the political character of Clarendon's attitude which determined his religious policy.

1. S. Parker, History of His Own Time, p.308

2. When certain members of the convention parliament proposed to translate into legislation the generous spirit of the royal Declaration on Ecclesiastical Affairs, Secretary Morrice at once intervened. Time, he said, was a better healer than laws -- a platitude which could only mean that the court party wanted to reap the benefits of royal promises without meeting any of the costs.

He was deeply committed to the aims and ideals of the established church, but he was willing enough to offer concessions when it¹ seemed expedient. As time went on, however, the interplay of political forces made it more and more necessary for Clarendon to take an unrelenting attitude toward the dissenters. As his enemies gained the ear of the king, he was thrown back on that element in the House of Commons which was most eager for an absolute establishment.

The aggressive loyalty of the House of Commons was perhaps the most decisive single factor in determining the official attitude to the nonconformists. The convention parliament had been cautious in introducing measures, anxious to be reasonable, and fearful of compromising the future by any rash decisions. But the tides of royalist reaction rose rapidly and swept everything before them. The Long Parliament of the Restoration might be lacking in restraint, but there was never any question of its eager loyalty to both the restored monarchy and the re-established church. Reresby, in mentioning the king's unwillingness to trouble himself much with business, remarks that "he had a parliament faithfully inclined to the crown and the Church, ready to do what he could² reasonably desire for the service of either." Reresby understates the case when he suggests that the House was ready merely to act on

1. cf. Stoughton, op.cit., III, pp.242-3

2. Reresby, Memoirs, p.48

the prompting of the king. "A young, headstrong party in the House of Commons drove on furiously", is the comment of Ambrose Barnes, and it more exactly describes the situation. From the very first the members left no doubt of their attitude in church affairs.¹ They made it obligatory for all members to receive Holy Communion according to the rites of the Church of England, and they ordered that the Solemn League and Covenant should be burned. During the next few years, they passed in rapid succession the various acts² which are known as the Clarendon Code. "I hear", said the king, "you are very zealous for the Church, and very solicitous, and even jealous, that there is not expedition enough used in that affair; I thank you for it, since, I presume, it proceeds from a good root of piety and devotion."³ Much of the early legislation of the reign can be explained as an uncontrollable outburst of loyalty on the part of "a youthful and inexperienced House of Commons", but the parliament retained the same character to the end. In 1678 Charles II told Reresby and others that in Coleman's incriminating correspondence had been found a proposal "to break the present parliament as too firm to the Church of England."⁴

In its determination to restore the Church to the fulness of its

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1. Burnet, History of My Own Times, Vol.I, pp.234,317; Vol.II, p.89
 2. of. K.Feiling, Clarendon and the Act of Uniformity, E.H.R., xliv. of. also Ogg: "The name is justified only in so far as Clarendon was the most influential figure who claimed that the policy was necessary. His complete acquiescence. . . was the price he paid for retaining power." Op.cit., Vol.I, p.206.
 3. Journals, March 3, 1662.
 4. Reresby, Memoirs, p.145.

prerogatives, the House of Commons faithfully reflected the temper of the times. From every quarter came evidence of exasperation against the nonconformists. The presses poured forth pamphlets attacking every phase of the Interregnum. So strong was the impulse to bait the dissenters that it had to be forbidden by Royal Proclamation.¹ This popular hostility expressed a widespread distaste of army rule and of the memory of the major generals, but the antipathy was sharpened to a distinctive intensity in the case of those who had suffered at the hands of the Puritans. The squires of England were eager for political vengeance; some found their opportunity in parliament,² others as justices of the peace. The religious legislation of the period was prompted not so much by a desire to suppress heresy as to punish political enemies. They regarded their antagonists, of course, with fear as well as hatred, and considerations of security were mixed with the desire for revenge. The same vindictive spirit often showed itself among the clergy of the established Church. It is only fair to remember that many who opposed nonconformity as misguided and perverse were unexpectedly generous in their treatment of individual dissenters, but many gave free rein to their exasperation.^x Robert South was perhaps the most popular and distinguished

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1. This was reissued again and again -- a sure proof that it was not obeyed.
 2. "Every man according to his passion, thought of adding 'somewhat' to the Act of Uniformity to make it more grievous to somebody he did not love." Clarendon, Continuation, p.1078
 - x. cf. Adam Martindale's account of his dealings with Bishop Hall of Chester, (Life, p.65). John Whiting gives innumerable instances of clergymen who persecuted dissenters with what he regarded as vindictive malice (Persecution Exposed, pp.53,65).

preacher of the early Restoration period, but it is a rare sermon in which at some point or other he does not vehemently abuse the dissenters.

Two further factors complicated at the very outset the problem of dealing with dissenters. The complete and unequivocal triumph of the Church of England bred in its members so confident a spirit that a conciliatory approach to their enemies was practically impossible. Even before the king's actual return, Clarendon foresaw¹ the danger of arrogance. At the Savoy Conference, the representatives of the established Church showed that they were willing to treat with dissenters only as the victors do with the vanquished. This may have been natural enough, but it did not help in solving delicate issues. Even Pepys notes the arrogant attitude which prosperity developed in the Church of England. "And the clergy so high", he remarks, "that all the people that I do meet with do² protest against their practice." Pepys was an accommodating layman of the established church; if he found the attitude of the clergy exasperating, it is easy to imagine how deeply it affected relations³ with the nonconformists. Arrogance is a poor temper in which to deal with intricate problems, and only when time had modified the intensity of feeling on both sides could a reasonable solution be found.

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1. Clarendon to Peter Barwick, in J. Barwick, Life of Barwick, p. 270. 520.
 2. Pepys Diary, (Aug. 31, 1661), Vol. II, p. 93; also Vol. III, pp. 220, 336. cf. also Cal. St. P. Dom., 1663-4, Charles II, Vol. LXXIX, 5.
 3. For a particularly clear statement of nonconformist feelings, cf. Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, p. 192

The cult of the royal martyr is one of the most remarkable phenomena of seventeenth century religious life, and the authority of the late king influenced important decisions at many points.¹ Nowhere was the appeal to the memory of Charles I used with greater effect than in dealings with the nonconformists. Sheldon accurately judged the temper of the times when he blocked comprehension by interjecting a contentious reference to Charles I.² In the early years of the Restoration period, the spectre of the royal martyr was always present to keep his former subjects divided.

Events soon became the true expositors of Anglican policy. The Savoy Conference was ostensibly a fulfilment of the promise of toleration contained in the king's earlier declarations; as a matter of fact it merely proved the delusive character of the dissenters' hopes.³ There was never any serious intention that it should achieve success. The pronouncements of Convocation gave an equally emphatic rebuff to the Presbyterians; all the changes sanctioned in the Book of Common Prayer were of a kind to aggravate rather than heal existing differences.⁴ The decisive reply to the dissenters came in legislative, not in theological terms. The inconclusive manoeuvring of the early days was over. The ascendancy of the episcopal church was established in theory and was now to be enforced in practice. Having

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1. Note, for example, the appeal to the words of Charles I in the argument against the sale of the lands of bishops and cathedrals, A Modest and Peaceable Letter Against Comprehension (1668)
 2. Parker, History of His Own Time, p. 51.
 3. cf. the instructions of the king to the bishops to have in complete form the revised Liturgy for presentation to Convocation (Clarendon, Continuation, p.1047). But Convocation and the Savoy Conference ran concurrently. Even more striking is the fact that the Act of Uniformity was passed while the Savoy Conference was still in session.
 4. Details are given in Cardwell's Conferences. Note also Burnet, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p.324.

finished the preliminary discussions, the authorities proceeded to establish the monopoly of a state church on the basis of penal legislation. A series of acts which appeared in rapid succession -- The Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Act, and the Five Mile Act -- laid the foundation of the policy of repression. For our purpose it is not necessary to examine the details of this legislation. To understand the changes in men's thought it is more important to know why the policy was adopted in the first place, and why it was finally abandoned.

The desire for political revenge was a motive the effect of which we have already noticed, but it was fear that gave it its irresistible force. The overthrow of the Commonwealth had been complete beyond all expectation, but the royalists were haunted by the fear that the days of their triumph were numbered. They lived in dread of a Puritan uprising; in the early days of the Restoration, the possibility that they might be overthrown was always before their minds. The king had disbanded Cromwell's army, and its officers, scattered throughout the land, seemed to the government to be innumerable¹ centres of potential unrest. The shades of old Cromwellian troopers disturbed the rest of officials all over England, and the

1. cf. Cosin's application to Archdeacon Basire for information regarding all persons in Cosin's parishes of Stanhope and Egglecliffe who had served in the late wars. Which ones were disaffected? (1664). Cosin, Correspondence, Vol. II, p. x. cf. also Burnet, Vol. I, p. 280. Samuel Parker mentions that the dissenters "had also officers on every side who might in a moment head their soldiers" (Own Time, p. 81). Schomberg, who was an experienced judge of soldiers, believed that the king was adding to his problems when he might have been increasing his strength. He had dismissed "the military men what had served under Cromwell, whom he thought the best officers he had ever seen", and instead was corrupting his army by entrusting it to a "company of wild young men." (Burnet, Vol. I, p. 302-3). For a nonconformist's bewildered reaction to the ease with which the Ironsides could be disbanded, cf. Barnes, Memorials, p. 101.

rumours of their sinister activities flew thick and fast.¹ The fears of the authorities made them look for signs of disaffection, and they found just enough to keep them in constant apprehension. The state papers of the time are full of reports -- many of them transparently absurd -- of the plottings of the sectaries, but for a government that felt insecure these were not matters to be lightly ignored. These fears of disaffection were constant and intense, and their object was invariably some group of dissenters. "The schismatics", declared Parker, "would never be quiet; . . . they would never want the will and inclination to rebel."²

It is impossible to understand the government's attitude to the dissenters if we forget the atmosphere of the Restoration period. The air was filled with wild reports, and the nervousness of the royalists made them the prey of every irresponsible rumour monger.³ Unfortunately for themselves, the nonconformists added to the misunderstanding by using language which invited misconstruction. Their minds turned naturally to apocalyptic and its imagery; they found comfort in strange Biblical regions which were entirely incomprehensible to the ordinary informer. Even Bishop Cosin noted with apprehension the psalms which the Dissenters chose to sing.⁴ Whatever the grounds,

1. cf. the innumerable entries in Cal.St.P.Dom., 1660-1 (esp.Sept. to Nov); cf. also, Ibid, 1663-4, Vol.LXXIV, 48-66.

2. Parker, op.cit., p. 5.

3. cf. the letter of William de la Valle, of Gateshead to Edward Grey of London (Cal.St.P.Dom.,Jan.10,1661/2). An attempt to surprise Newcastle has failed, but the factious merchants "are dispersing infinite quantities of powder and shot" throughout the northern counties, and the disbanded forces are ready "to join to raise a new war." The preachers are fanning the discontent, and "common discourse has it that the Government will not last a year." He ends on a melancholy note -- "hellish designs are in embryo."

4. Cosin, Correspondence, Vol.II, p.198

the result of these fears was an invariable tendency to identify dissent with sedition. In Cosin's Correspondence the two terms¹ are practically interchangeable, and in the state papers of Secretary Bennett nonconformist meetings are assumed to have a revolutionary purpose.² This was perhaps inevitable when the Restoration was still a recent event, and the new regime comparatively untried, but the same argument appears after a dozen years. In 1673, when the proposed Toleration Act was under debate, a member of the House of Commons declared "that if you pass this Act you give away the peace of the nation. A Puritan was ever a rebel. These³ dissenters made up the whole army against the king." At times of particular crisis it was assumed that the nonconformists would side with the nation's foes. Whenever there was war with Holland, it was believed that the loyalties of dissenters really lay across the⁴ sea. There was an amusing recognition that in moments of need the government could not expect support from people whom it normally persecuted, but, though the execution of the penal laws might⁵ be temporarily eased, there was no disposition to push this in-

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1. Cosin, Correspondence, Vol.II, pp. 197-205; cf. Letters to Sir. J. Williamson, Vol.I, p.93.
 2. Cal.St.P.Dom., June 20, Sept.22, Oct.12, 1663.
 3. Parliamentary History, Vol.IV, p.572.
 4. Cal.St.P.Dom., 1663-4, Charles II, Vol.XCVII, 33. cf. Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol.I, p.26: There had been a rumour that the fleet had suffered defeat, and "in general all the fanatics believe it still."
 5. cf. Arlington's justification of the Declaration of Indulgence: "to keep all quiet at home whilst we are busied abroad."

sight to its logical conclusion. The nonconformists were likewise suspected of harbouring designs against the king's life. It was the settled conviction of royalists that the execution of Charles I had been a revelation of the true Puritan mentality, and what they had accomplished once they would presumably attempt again. The measures taken "for the safety and preservation of his majesty's person," were aimed against the nonconformists, and it was assumed that dissenters were actually indistinguishable¹ from Jesuits.

It is hardly too much to say that a kind of mythology grew up around the Puritans. Like all mythologies, it was only half believed, but in case of need it could be invoked with terrible effect. Again and again the manifestations of the prevalent fear disfigure the pages of Restoration history. The Clarendon Code² was "panic legislation," due not so much to zeal for Anglican doctrine or discipline as to a form of national hysteria. For the individual sufferer, the result might be terrible indeed. "Without any known reason for it" he might be "charged upon suspicion³ with a design upon the government." However secure he might feel in his innocence, and however imperfectly the charge against him might be substantiated, fear on the bench was a poor guarantee of justice for those at the bar. "Neither liberty nor life is safe

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1. The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, p.149. cf. Cosin, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 93
 2. Ogg. op. cit., Vol.I, p. 208.
 3. Memorials of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, p.191

for an hour," writes John Jopling of Newcastle; "the beast roars and rages, and the prisons are full."¹ Sometimes nonconformists were imprisoned as part of an intelligible preventive measure,² but in the earlier years of the period it was often due merely to the blind working of fear.³

The policy of repression clearly expressed the fears and uncertainties which were natural at such a time, and it had the further advantage of immediate political expediency. Its ultimate results might not be promising, but at times of intense feeling men do not take long views. Exhilaration and relief made it easy for them to be content with the present, and the policy of repression admirably suited the needs of the moment. The reaction against everything Puritan was running strong; both in town and country people were willing to see the dissenters repressed. Many factors contributed to create this frame of mind, but it is important to notice that for those responsible for framing policy, in church and state alike, there was no expedient so certain to win easy applause as persecuting the dissenters. Clarendon retained his power by acquiescing in the penal legislation demanded by an ultra-loyalist House of Commons. The members, in their turn, commended themselves to the

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1. Intercepted letter written to Mary Hutchinson, 4 June 1664. Cal.St.P.Dom., 1661-2, Charles II, Vol.LXIII, 34.
 2. As when all nonconformist ministers were arrested at the outbreak of the Monmouth rebellion. cf. Martindale, Life, p.234.
 3. Later it might also be due to policy on the part of an aspiring Judge. cf. the story of Jeffries' brutal treatment of the young men at Newcastle who had formed a religious association. It is worth noticing that this fear sometimes wreaked its own revenges, cf. the amusing story told in Hatton Correspondence, Vol.II,pp. 60-1.

permissible, remarked Parker, for the king to sanction religious toleration, "yet it is a very dangerous thing to encourage several sects of religion in the same kingdom; every one of them would wage war against another, each of them would be an enemy to the rest, and all of them to the Church established by law; it was found by the experience of all ages, that differences in religion always ended in blows; ... the Christian world had seldom been engaged in civil war which was not raised under a pretence of religion."¹ In some quarters this theory reigned unchallenged right to the end of the period. When the Revolution settlement was under discussion, Prideaux, who as archdeacon of Suffolk spoke out of a background of practical experience, urged that those who attended conventicles should be registered and excluded from all government positions. His reason is illuminating: "Nothing is more unreasonable than that those who are against the government should have any hand in the management of it."² Prideaux had accepted the Toleration Act; dissenters should be free to worship as they pleased, but their separation from the state church still made them bad citizens. Thus far a conservative churchman had moved in his thinking; for most of his contemporaries this illogi-

1. S. Parker, History of His Own Times, p.354.

2. Humphrey Prideaux, Letters, p.154

cal compromise was no longer necessary. They had relinquished the view of church and state which it presupposed.

Still another motive prompting the government to persecute the dissenters was the question of the balance of political power in the towns. Fear and vindictiveness, immediate expediency, political theory, -- all these played their part, it is well always to remember that circumstances made it very convenient to invoke a religious test in order to exclude opponents from political power. The town corporations were important bodies, and it was the Government's intention to exclude the nonconformists from all positions of influence. A dissenter, if elected to office in a town, might do much to shield all other dissenters from the penalties of the law, and in addition he might influence the choice of members of parliament. The Corporation Act was plainly an attack on the political status of dissenters, and the Five Mile Act attempted to weaken them still further by depriving them of the leaders who had won a place of influence in the corporate towns. But it proved much easier to pass such laws at Westminster than to secure their uniform enforcement. In spite of the Corporation Act, the dissenters often played an active part in municipal affairs. They were elected to the governing bodies of towns; they became mayors or sheriffs or bailiffs, and wherever they held office they reduced the penal laws to impotence. This did not take place with-

out a struggle, and the state papers of the period are filled with reports from those who championed the church party. From Chester, Bristol, Yarmouth, Gloucester came accounts of the varying fortunes¹ of the fight, and they all serve to emphasize the importance of one of the motives behind the policy of repression. But the attempt to exclude the dissenters from political influence was bound to fail. As long as the two parties were permitted in the country, one of them would sooner or later realize that the nonconformists were potential supporters too strong to be neglected.

The intention of the policy of persecution was clear enough. As drafted at Westminster, there was no reasonable doubt as to how it ought to operate. It was a great deal easier, however, to make laws in the capital than to enforce them in the counties. It is very doubtful whether the policy of repression was ever uniformly applied. Even at the height of the Anglican reaction, there were towns where the nonconformists were so strong that it was either impossible or inexpedient fully to enforce it, and a variety of other local circumstances often impeded the execution of the law. The agents of the government in this matter were the justices of the peace, and the degree of persecution varied with their willingness

1. For Chester, Cal.St.P.Dom., Aug.4,1664; for Bristol, Cal.St.P.Dom., Sept.16,1662, Oct.5,1663, Oct.12,1663, Jan.2,1663/4, Feb.13,1663/4 &c., also many references in such nonconformist literature as Whiting, Persecution Exposed, Besse, Sufferings of the Quakers. cf. Latimer, Bristol in the Seventeenth Century; for Yarmouth, Cal.St.P.Dom., Dec.16,18,23,1667, Jan.24,1668, Dec.9,1668, Oct.9, 1668; for Gloucester, Cal.St.P.Dom., Sept.7, 10,22, 1670.

to co-operate. In the first flush of their success, many of them were anxious enough to do their part, but when the novelty of recovered power had worn off, they were much less eager to co-operate. When this happened, the government experienced all the difficulties which could arise from the vagaries of individual disposition or the peculiarities of local circumstance. The best the government could expect was an uneven enforcement which made the law effective at some times and in some places.¹ The higher authorities, especially the bishops, found it necessary to prod reluctant justices of the peace.² So pronounced did the laxity become that laws were passed to compel the justices to take action. A constable who knew about a conventicle and did not report it was to be fined £5, but if a justice refused to convict he was subject to a fine of £100.³ There could be no clearer confession of the failure of the justices to play their part in enforcing the policy of persecution.⁴

Even granted goodwill and zeal on the part of the justices, the attitude of their superiors might reduce them to confusion and impotence. In many parts of the north, the laws against the dissenters were very intermittently enforced. The sparsely settled

1. cf. Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol.I, p.134

2. cf. especially Cosin's relations with the mayor and corporation of Newcastle. Correspondence, II, p.200. Newcastle's leniency was notorious - Cal.St.P.Dom., 1668-9, p.342. Note also the very illuminating evidence supplied by the Sheldon MSS, especially the letters from the Bishop of Exeter (Ward) and the Bishop of Chester.

3. The Second Conventicle Act, April 11, 1670.

4. cf. Reresby, op.cit., p.256; also Burnet on Sir Edmund Godfrey, op.cit., Vol.II, p.163.

nature of the country was in part responsible, but a more important factor was the attitude of the Lords lieutenants. The Duke of Buckingham in Yorkshire showed no interest in enforcing the Clarendon Code, while in Lancashire the Earl of Derby exercised a definitely restraining influence. Still more unsettling was the conflict of opinion between the parliament and the king. After Charles II had exercised his prerogative to suspend laws passed by parliament, the justices were never quite sure how to act. Archdeacon Granville, a man whose loyalty to the establishment was above suspicion, wrote to Secretary Cooke to ask what to do about a conventicle which was meeting under the very walls of Durham Cathedral. Should the justices¹ take action or not? It is significant that the question was even asked.

No doubt most justices would have assented in theory to the assumptions on which the policy of persecution rested, but it was a different matter when it actually came to enforcing the laws. All kinds of personal considerations complicated the issue. The dissenter might be a highly respected member of the community; he might even be a friend² or relative of the justice himself. Henry Newcombe of Manchester found that he could count on the justices

1. Remains of Dennis Granville, Vol.II, pp. 13-4. Note also Cal. St.P.Dom., 1663-4, Charles II, Vol. LXXII, 12. For further evidence of the uncertainties which beset justices, cf. Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol.I, pp.42 & 134.

2. cf. The Journal of John Gratton, p.145

giving him warning of impending trouble, and they even advised him how to keep clear of the law.¹ It might be that the dissenter was too valuable in the community to be harshly treated.²

The difficulty of enforcing the law shows that the thought of the church was already changing. It is clear that in regard to persecution not all the members of the establishment were in agreement. The bishops and many of the clergy regarded persecution as a useful means of restoring church order, and they were usually the people most active in demanding that the laws should be enforced. The attitude of the justices, however, proves that many of the influential laymen were not greatly concerned to secure religious uniformity by means of persecution. They were not even sufficiently convinced of the political usefulness of the laws to put them into effect. The policy of repression cannot then have expressed the mind of more than a minority of the restored church. Some wanted the laws because of political security and others for reasons of church discipline, but having secured the legislation neither group could get the laws effectively enforced. It is necessary to repeat that persecution accorded well enough with the general pattern of seventeenth century thought; those who would not put it into practice would probably have applauded it in principle, but at this point their theory no longer governed their conduct.

1. The Diary of Henry Newcombe, p.126

2. The Life of Adam Martindale, written by himself, p.193.

In some quarters, however, uneasiness as to the justifiability of persecution was manifestly gaining ground. Shortly after the turn of the century, Daniel Defoe re-issued Thomas Delaune's "Plea for nonconformists", and contributed a preface. Defoe was an expert controversialist, skilled in the cut and thrust of effective debate, and in the sufferings of Delaune he found a useful pretext for attacking the church party of his own day. But he referred to conditions as they existed on the eve of the Act of Toleration, and he was too astute a writer to make statements which his antagonists could easily have refuted. Events had proved, he said, that such practices as the imprisonment of Delaune should cease; any unbiased person could judge "whether a legal toleration was not absolutely necessary to screen the Church of England herself from the scandal of those men that acted under her authority so much against her principles." "To answer sober arguments with sour coercives, to dispute by the gaol and the hangman, to debate by the prison and not by the pen: these have been the peculiarity of the party, and the power of persecution, not of persuasion, has been the way of their usage to dissenters." Defoe did not soften matters for his antagonists, but Delaune's imprisonment and death was not the kind of incident on which men of sensitive conscience would choose to dwell. As a controversialist he chose his ground carefully, and

he was surely right when he insisted that by the end of the Restoration period it had become apparent to all wise friends of the Church that any disclosure of the record of persecution would injure the Church; "it would make her appear practising what she did not profess, and acting against her very foundation principles."¹ If the record would not bear scrutiny, the policy could hardly expect defence.

1. Defoe's preface, "A Plea for Nonconformists (1706), pp.3,5,6.

CHAPTER TEN. PERSECUTION AND TOLERATION (II)

WHY THE POLICY OF REPRESSION FAILED AND WAS ABANDONED.

The Revolution of 1688 ended the era of persecution in England. The incidents which had preceded the overthrow of James II, the combination of forces which had brought it about, the new temper of which the Revolution was the symbol rather than the cause -- these all discredited the policy of repression. It was abandoned without protest because its failure had been growing more apparent year by year. It had failed most conspicuously at the point where contemporary theory had demanded success. Many causes prompted those in power to seek revenge, but the justification had been the plea for a united nation. The seventeenth century had accepted as a truism the unity of church and state. A strong nation could no more countenance religious minorities than it could acquiesce in political secession. The most reputable of the arguments advanced for repression of the dissenters was the claim that it would force the dissenters into the established church, and so strengthen the nation. This was both the hope and the expectation of the early years of the period. The Baron of Kinderton "could not believe" ¹ that a dissenter "would refuse to conform." He might not want

1. The Life of Adam Martindale, written by himself, p. 184

to acquiesce, and if left in comfort and security might persist in his stubborn ways, but a little pressure would soon cure his obstinacy. But the remedy did not work. Instead of uniting the nation, persecution was aggravating its divisions.¹ An undated paper of Sir John Reresby describes the city of York as sharply divided into loyal and factious parties. On the one side were those most closely associated with the church; on the other "the dissenting element". "It is now come to that that there is not only a separation of interests, but few do buy of or have any commerce but with those of their principle."² The failure to achieve unity was so notable that it appears as one of the stock arguments in favour of toleration. The recent history of Europe -- so ran the claim -- abounded in instances where coercion had led only to misery; it had been so in England under Charles I, and his son's reign was supplying new examples of the futility of repression.³ This was actually the plea on which Charles II defended his Declaration of Indulgence. "There was very little fruit of all those forcible courses and many frequent ways of coercion that had been used for reducing all erring and dissenting persons."⁴ Moreover, the intermittent application of the policy had robbed it of any possibility of success it might have had. In

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1. cf. in Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, I, pp.26 & 53, for the effect of persecution on national unity and morale. In time of crisis, disheartening rumours were most promptly believed and circulated by the victims of persecution.
 2. From a paper in the Spencer MSS, evidently referring to the end of the reign of Charles II. Reresby, p.264n. Cf. for similar conditions in Yarmouth, Cal.St.P.Dom.,Feb.25,1668.
 3. cf. the arguments cited in Parker, History of His Own Time,p.308
 4. Declaration of Indulgence, 1672.

the intervals between acute persecution the dissenters always collected their scattered forces. After the year of grace which the Declaration of Indulgence allowed them, there was less likelihood¹ than ever that they could be suppressed. By the end of the period, men were prepared to accept the continuance of nonconformist groups. Even comprehension was no longer a living issue. For nearly thirty years Englishmen had tried to regiment their fellow-countrymen into one religious body. The insistence on uniformity had only strengthened disagreement: nonconformity had become a permanent element in English life.

Repression had failed, and the policy could be abandoned more easily because the need for it seemed less acute. The nonconformists could not be suppressed, but they could be safely tolerated. At the Restoration, and in the immediately succeeding years, the authorities were quite persuaded that the dissenters were a menace both to church and state. The political issue had now assumed a wholly new complexion, and religiously the challenge of dissent was waning. Earlier in the period there had been ample evidence² of the vitality of the sects. In 1688 all indications pointed in

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1. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism, 1660-1688, p.61
 2. cf. the numerous entries in Cal.St.P.Dom., August to October, 1667. cf. also the number of licenses issued for nonconformist preachers 1672. Note the words of a bishop, writing to Williamson: "these licensed persons increase strangely. The orthodox poor clergy are out of heart. Shall nothing be done to support them against the Presbyterians, who grow and multiply faster than the other." State Papers, 1672; quoted by Stoughton, III, p.400.

the opposite direction. In writing (in 1693) to his son who was contemplating the ministry, Ambrose Barnes took a serious view of the outlook for nonconformity. "Now because I apprehend, not the English affairs in general, but the interest of religion among dissenters in particular, taking a sore shrink by narrow views and self-seeking in all stations, you will not take it amiss to be cautioned¹ against this encroaching evil." Churchmen, we are told, were as stiff as ever, but were delighted "to find nonconformists more pliable", and the numbers of dissenters have been "greatly diminished." Emigration had unquestionably thinned the ranks of nonconformity, and among Quakers there is frequent reference to the weakening of local meetings² because so many members had left for the new world. Martindale, depressed perhaps by age and illness, explained the gloom in which he ended his autobiography by mentioning the numerous deaths among the leaders of dissent. By 1688 the men who had risen to positions of commanding eminence in the golden days of Puritanism had for the most part left the stage. Their successors had no chance to become equally famous, and were also manifestly men of lesser gifts. No one arose to take the place of Baxter, Owen, Calamy or Manton. What is more, the nonconformists were even abandoning the distinctive tenets

1. Memoirs of the Life of Ambrose Barnes, p.87

2. Note also Pepy's Diary, Vol.III, p.5, where a nonconformist friend assures Pepys, as early as Jan.6,1662/3, that persecution will inevitably result in extensive emigration.

which had marked them off from the established church. Calvinism was everywhere on the decline. By 1688 there were signs that dissent was abandoning both its aggressive tactics and its militant faith. The change in the Anglican attitude to dissent was certainly due in part to the new outlook of the leaders of the Church of England, but it was also a response to an altered temper among the nonconformists.

The Church of England could regard the sects as a less serious menace than they had seemed to be thirty years before, and the State had even better reason to be reassured. By 1689 it was quite apparent that the dissenters were not a threat to public security. In politics there is nothing that succeeds like success, and the monarchy had stood for a generation. No one could seriously regard the nonconformists as potential regicides, and the charge of revolutionary aims was less and less plausible. With every year that passed, the restored monarchy became more firmly rooted in the national life. The question of the moment was not, "Shall we have a king?" It was merely "Which king shall we accept?" The hysteria which was a sign of the insecurity of 1660 had disappeared. In a calmer atmosphere the true status of the nonconformists became apparent. They were Englishmen, and in the difficult months that preceded the fall of James II they showed that, like other Englishmen, they were primarily concerned with the welfare of England as a whole.

Experience had shown that the fear of the dissenters was largely groundless and almost always exaggerated. In the years preceding 1688 a new fear had arisen which drove it into the background. The threat from the nonconformists seemed less real as the challenge of the papists became more serious. James II at least achieved this, that he altered the religious perspective of his subjects. Whenever popery seemed on the increase, there was a tendency for the Anglicans to treat the dissenters with more leniency than usual,¹ but the attempt of James to deliver the Church of England into the hands of Roman Catholics created a situation wholly new in kind. Consequently the attitude of the clergy in 1688 was quite different from what it had been even a decade earlier. In 1677 they had been prepared to uphold absolutism; their opposition was directed chiefly against the nonconformists, and they had been apathetic regarding the encroachments of the Roman Catholics. By 1688 the activities of James and his Jesuit counsellors had opened their eyes to the possibility that Romanism might actually be re-established in England. In their alarm they realized that the united strength of Protestantism was necessary to meet the crisis, and they were ready to change their conduct to their dissenting brethren.²

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1. N. Luttrell, Brief Historical Narration, I, p.76. cf. also The Conformist's Plea for the Non-Conformists (1681), passim.
 2. cf. Lord Russell's speech on the scaffold, cf. also Simon Patrick's Autobiography, p.209; also Burnet, History of My Own Time. For the nonconformist view of the danger, cf. Barnes: "After all our controversies he apprehended that the last debate would not be between conformists and nonconformists, but between protestants and papists." p. 251.

The new fear might have ceased to operate when its occasion disappeared, and it left abiding consequences only because of the way in which the nonconformists responded to the common danger. They had been severely persecuted, and they might easily have felt that they had little cause to make common ground with the Anglicans. This, at least, was the assumption of King James. He offered toleration to the dissenters in the belief that he could gain their support in his primary purpose of increasing the privileges of Roman Catholics. For a time there seemed to be some chance that he might succeed. Addresses of grateful acknowledgment began to come in from various nonconformist groups, and some of the leaders -- notably Alsop and Lobb, -- fell in with the king's design. Others, however, were so disturbed about the dispensing power that they refused to have anything to do with an address. Soon more positive signs of their opposition to James began to appear. Reresby tells us that when the seven bishops were imprisoned in the tower, ten nonconformist ministers went to visit them, "which the King took ill, and sent for four of them to reprimand them. They answered that they could not but adhere to them as men constant to the protestant faith."¹ In face of "the dread of the king's intentions to introduce popery," the nonconformists were "strongly persuaded of the

1. Reresby, p. 396

importance of maintaining the Church of England in its full strength¹ as the great defence against such a design." Dr. Samuel Freeman reported to Lord Hatton that "some of the dissenters are very brisk upon the dissolution of the parliament, but I am of opinion the popish interest will not find that assistance from them when a new one is to be chosen as is expected."² Even more striking was the verdict of the papal nuncio. "There is no reasonable expectation," he says, "of a division among the Anglicans, and our hopes from the nonconformists are vanished."³

Some of the credit for this discernment may be given to the good sense and shrewd insight of the nonconformists. They realized, as Howe made clear, that there was something suspicious in the sudden desire of the papists to provide relief for the dissenters. But their own perceptions were volubly supplemented by the advice of others. When the Romanists began to bid for nonconformist support, the Church of England had to follow suit. Both the bishops and the political leaders of the Church of England party definitely promised to support an Act of Toleration as soon as a free parliament should meet.⁴ Perhaps one of the most effective appeals to the nonconformists was Lord Halifax's famous "Letter to a Dissenter."

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1. Hunter's Life of Oliver Heywood, p.222
 2. Hatton Correspondence, II, p.68
 3. Quoted in Mackintosh, History of the English Revolution, p.253.
 4. For a new attitude to the nonconformists, cf. Sancroft's articles of 1687. Note also Burnett's letter to the Dissenters, State Tracts from Restoration to Revolution, Vol. II, p.289, London 2 Vols., 1689-1692.

Though published anonymously and by a secret press, a tactical blunder by Sir Roger L'Estrange gave it wide circulation. By writing a reply he only made the original more accessible.¹ Its suave persuasive wit, its reasonable tone, its combination of humility for past errors with manifest sincerity in promising concessions, above all its striking timeliness, assured it an eager reading. Few pamphlets in English history can have deserved more fully so large a measure of influence. Halifax frankly acknowledged that it would only be human for the dissenters to snatch at the specious promises of King James. "I am neither surprised nor provoked, to see that in the condition you were put into by the Laws, and the ill circumstances you lay under by having the Exclusion and Rebellion laid to your charge, you were desirous to make yourselves less uneasy and obnoxious to authority. Men who are sore, run to the nearest remedy with too much haste to consider all the consequences; grains of allowance are to be given, where nature giveth such strong influences. When to men under sufferings it offereth ease, the present pain will hardly allow time to examine the remedies; and the strongest reason can hardly gain a fair audience from your mind, while so possessed, till the smart is a little allayed."² The

1. of. Bramston, pp. 299-300

2. Halifax, Complete Works (ed. by W. Raleigh) p.129

need for careful consideration could not have been more delicately urged, and with this preparation he offers for their consideration two important facts. "The first is, the cause you have to suspect your new friends. The second, the duty incumbent upon you, in Christianity and prudence, not to hazard the public safety, neither by desire of ease, nor of revenge."¹ The dissenters only stood to suffer by accepting the deceptive offers of the king. "If the case then should be, that the price expected from you for this liberty, is giving up your right in the Laws, sure you will think twice, before you go any further in such a losing bargain."² They should equally consider the extent to which the other side is already committed to their constitutional relief. "The Church of England, convinced of its error in being severe to you; the Parliament, whenever it meeteth, sure to be gentle to you; the next Heir bred in the country which you have so often quoted for a pattern of indulgence; a general agreement of all thinking men that we must no more cut ourselves off from the Protestants abroad, but rather enlarge the foundations upon which we are to build our defences against the common enemy; so that in truth all things seem to conspire to give you ease and satisfaction, if by too much haste to anticipate your

1. Halifax, Complete works (ed. by W. Raleigh) p. 129

2. Ibid, p.135.

good fortune, you do not destroy it." ¹ The tone of this remarkable pamphlet illustrates the change which was taking place. Here was a new note in the debate with the dissenters; after such appeals in time of crisis there could be no return to the old repressive ways.

The Restoration settlement presupposed that the dissenters, having no part in the life of the Church, should also have no part in the life of the state. Persecution was to bring them back to the Church; when this was accomplished, they could again play their rôle in the life of the community. This assumption underlay not only the Corporation Act -- in which it clearly appears -- but all the various phases of the policy of repression. By 1688 the attempt to secure uniformity by persecution had been abandoned. In the intervening years the nonconformists had claimed and won for themselves a distinctive place in the political life of England. In response to this altered situation, the authorities had to find a new way of treating them. But the change, though set in sharp relief by the Revolution, had been gradually taking place throughout the period.

The political rôle of the nonconformists was determined by the circumstances attending the Restoration. The Interregnum had created a new class of landowners and the problem was so complex

1. Halifax, Complete Works (ed. by W. Raleigh) p. 140.

that on his return the king was unable to evict its members. The effect on political life extended far beyond anything the court could immediately foresee. The entry of this new class of land-owners into public life served to broaden considerably the basis of allegiance to the crown. At the same time it introduced a new factor into the political struggles of the time. The new land-owners were accustomed to "an intelligent restiveness" under the exactions of authority, and were not prepared to acquiesce in any policy simply because Whitehall might dictate it. "Whiggery," as Mr. Ogg neatly remarks, "may have begun when lay preachers acquired¹ property." Moreover the policies of a vehemently Church of England parliament made it inevitable that any opposition group would make common cause with those whom the Anglican squires had consistently repressed. The makers of the Clarendon Code had fashioned throughout the country a party ready to support their political foes.

From the very outset, shrewd observers had seen that the dissenters would be no negligible political force. Charles II recognized their possibilities at once. In seeking some way of strengthening the power of the crown against the overwhelming strength of the Church party in the Cavalier parliament, he had turned to the groups outside the Church. He proposed to give relief to dissenters

1. D. Ogg - England in the Reign of Charles II, I. p.163.

(both Catholic and Protestant) by means of the royal prerogative of dispensing with the laws. "He thus hoped to preserve the dissenters as his humble clients and vassals, very much as the mediaeval kings used for their own ends to preserve the Jews from popular malice.¹

There was never any serious likelihood that Charles could win and hold the loyalty of the nonconformists. His protection was too intermittent, and in the struggle with Parliament the instrument of relief (the use of the royal prerogative) was shattered. Moreover, his popish sympathies and his obvious intention of assisting the Roman Catholics alienated the protestant dissenters. They would rather have suffered themselves than have seen the threat of popery increased. Consequently they never became a party attached by the bonds of humble loyalty to the Crown; instead they found their place within that balance of forces which parliamentary government was already beginning to create.

It was natural that the political weight of nonconformity should first be felt in local politics. The Corporation Act, in attempting to break it, acknowledged the reality of what the Anglicans in the Cavalier Parliament regarded as a serious threat. Nor was legislation sufficient to destroy the political power of the non-

1. G.M.Trevelyan - The English Revolution, p.25

conformists. Yarmouth was a town regarding whose affairs the government was kept closely informed, and from 1666 onwards there was no doubt of the influence of dissenters. In that year they threw off the hesitancy which had marked them since the Restoration. Their conventicles were more openly held, and the political counterpart was a successful attempt to capture the government of the town. For some time not half the members of the Corporation were churchmen. Many of the officers of the town were nonconformists, and as a result many of the proclamations were ignored and the penal laws were not enforced.¹ In Oxford, Humphrey Prideaux describes a somewhat similar situation. A Presbyterian mayor was elected "to serve the Presbyterians as there shall be occasion,"² and at once the tension between town and gown became acute. The Anglican and Tory loyalties of the university strengthened the alliance between Whig and nonconformist. "The old Lady Lovelace," remarks Prideaux, "is now grown so zealous a Whig that she now goes every Sunday to the Lady Anglesey's to make one of the holy sisters at her conventicle."³ When the town sent a deputation to wait on the King at Newmarket, they were roughly handled by the link boys, who called them "Presbyterian petitioners and Whig dogs, and saluted them into the bargain with stones and dirt."⁴

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1. For details, see the interesting series of documents in Cal.St. P.Dom., 1668, pp.235-250.
 2. Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis, p.80
 3. Ibid., p.90.
 4. Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis, p.92

What was a feature of local politics soon appeared in a wider setting. In describing the elections for parliament in 1679, Sir John Reresby mentions the candidates for knights of the shire, and adds that "the sectaries and fanatics" threw their weight solidly¹ behind two of the contestants. This introduced an element which even great political leaders could not ignore. In 1680, the Duke of Buckingham summoned John Howe to his mansion, and after discreet preliminaries, hinted that "the nonconformists were too numerous and too powerful to be any longer neglected; that they deserved regard, and that if they had a friend near the throne, who possessed influence with the court generally, to give them advice in critical emergencies, and to convey their requests to the Royal ear, they² would find it much to their advantage." In Buckingham's case it was easier to recognize their usefulness than it was to convince them that he would be a suitable champion of their cause. Shaftesbury, however, succeeded in attaching the dissenters to his party. In Dorset, where his influence was strong, he found that the nonconformists could be most useful in securing the election of desired members of parliament. Parker complains that when his position at court became insecure, Shaftesbury "openly fled to the party

1. Reresby, p.177.

2. Rogers' Life of Howe, p.180

of the sectaries," and adds that he was not above angling for their support with professions of religious zeal. He protested that "he would rather lose his life than his religion"; that "the salvation of his soul was dearer to him than the empire of the whole world."¹ Here satire doubtless predominates over truth, but there must be some correspondence with known facts or the caricature would defeat its own ends. At all events, when Shaftesbury was imprisoned, contemporaries regarded his arrest as a blow to the "fanatics."² The extent to which the political alignment of dissent with whiggery had become a widely recognized fact is indicated by Luttrell's summary of the pamphlet warfare of 1681. After indicating the claims of each party, he gives the names which were bandied about. "The latter party have been called by the former Whigs, fanatics, covenanters, bromingham protestants, &c; and the former are called by the latter Tories, tentives, Yorkists, high-flown churchmen, &c.; whereby, there is to be feared, there is a great division and animosity between those that call themselves Church of England men and those that are dissenters."³

From this association there followed certain disagreeable results. It might be useful at times to play a recognized political rôle, but it might equally prove disastrous. During the last

1. S. Parker, Own Times, pp.301-2.

2. N. Luttrell, Brief Historical Relation, I, p.106

3. Luttrell, Ibid, I, p.124.

few years of Charles II's reign, the Whigs and Tories were engaged in an insane and senseless conflict. Its fury and vindictiveness make it one of the most discreditable episodes in the history of the seventeenth century,¹ and the dissenters were caught in its toils. The years from 1682 to 1685 were a period of sharp persecution, but it was not primarily for their religious convictions that the dissenters suffered. They were implicated in the wild schemes of Shaftesbury, and though their leader could fly to Holland and the Whig landowners withdrew to their estates, the nonconformists were left exposed to the full fury of their foes. At recent elections they had supported the members of the opposition; they were committed to certain views regarding constitutional liberty. "Which alone," remarked John Howe, "and not our mere dissent from the Church of England in matters of religion . . drew upon us, soon after the dissolution of the last of those parliaments, that dreadful storm of persecution that destroyed not a small number of lives² in gaols, and ruined multitudes of families."

It was one of James II's unconscious services to English life that he arrested this mad internecine warfare. His subjects believed that he had adopted a policy which would ultimately overturn the laws of England; at all events his conduct brought both parties to their senses. When faced with so serious a common dan-

1. cf. Burnet, History of My Own Times, II, pp. 208, 210.
2. John Howe - Case of Protestant Dissenters, p.85

ger, they had to forget their partisan antipathies and unite to save the constitutional framework of the land. The Revolution of 1688 was the joint achievement of both the parties in Church and State. What neither Whig nor Tory, churchman nor dissenter, could do separately, they did together. As a result, in 1689 they stood together as the joint custodians of power, and neither could demand that the clients of the other party should be liable to persecution. What they had won jointly, neither could appropriate to individual party ends. The last great persecution of the nonconformists was due to political considerations, but so was the toleration which they finally won. Because they had found a place in the Whig party, they were entitled to share in the victory to which Whigs as well as Tories had contributed. Consequently the characteristic feature of the Revolution settlement was the freedom -- religious as well as political -- which the individual could claim within the framework of the law.

Persecution is only possible in a certain kind of intellectual environment. It presupposes a conviction of the truth of your cause so uncompromising as to border on fanaticism. You must believe that you are wholly right, and that the errors of your antagonists are too wicked to be endured. In some quarters this temper prevailed in 1660. The High Church Anglicans were firmly per-

suaded of the truth of their doctrine and discipline. Many who were theologically less assured shared in the semi-religious horror aroused by the execution of King Charles I, and important elements in the community gave way to intolerance because they wanted political revenge. But in the next thirty years the forces making for persecution perceptibly weakened. The political situation had modified in important respects; the lustre of the royal martyr had been slightly dimmed by the unconstitutional behaviour of his son, and a new spirit was at large in the world of religious thought. Throughout the period Latitudinarianism was making steady progress. It was relatively free from the intensity without which persecution is impossible. In all their dealings with nonconformists its representatives had shown that they were essentially of an accommodating disposition, and their attitude arose naturally from their thought. Moreover, Latitudinarianism was the theological expression of a temper diffused far beyond the bounds of strict church membership. As the period wore on religious writers became increasingly concerned with "atheistical and irreligious" tendencies. There was already abroad an anticipation of the cool and disengaged propriety of eighteenth century enlightenment. To such a mentality, the harrasing of minor sects -- or even the persecution of important religious minorities -- was not the occupation of self-respecting men.

There was also at work a factor more positive than either breadth of outlook or indifference of temper. Parallel with, and partly created by, Latitudinarianism was a new belief in the theory of toleration. Throughout the period a different attitude to other people's convictions had been steadily gaining ground. Hitherto only a few of the sectaries had been wholly committed to the dangerous view that men should be free to worship as their consciences might dictate.¹ At the Restoration, both Anglicans and Presbyterians would have denounced this as abominable heresy. The detailed story of the growth of a different attitude belongs to another part of this study; here it is only necessary to point out that the spread of a new spirit definitely contributed to the change in the treatment of dissenters. Reresby, who was doubtless representative of many other Anglican squires, assures us that his opposition to the repeal of the test and penal laws was not due to any dread of toleration. "Not but I believed," he remarks, "most men were now convinced that liberty of conscience was a thing of advantage to the nation."² There had been no such widespread conviction a generation earlier, and the change was the necessary pre-condition of the Toleration Act.

1. Even among the sects who went furthest, there was usually one notable reservation. Very few indeed were prepared to suggest that toleration should be extended to the papists. The Quakers, I believe, are the only exception to this rule. In fairness it should be noted that antipathy to popery was aggravated by political factors. On religious grounds men believed that the Roman Catholics should be denied liberty of worship, but they also believed that popish views regarding the state made Catholics dangerous citizens.

2. Reresby, p.393

Time, as Secretary Morrice remarked, is a great healer, and in the religious controversies of the seventeenth century it was effective because it permitted the growth of new and better relationships. As the years went by, the bitterness created by the Civil War died down, and men and women, whatever their differences of opinion, found that they preferred to live as friends rather than foes. Having learned to respect their neighbours as human beings, they declined to persecute them as sectaries. When the Rev. Mr. Wilson, a Derbyshire clergyman, attempted to stir up the justices against the Quakers, Justice Ayre and Justice Ashton "held him off, telling him that they were not willing to have a hand in ruining their neighbours."¹ As the intensity of former controversies was forgotten, men of differing religious loyalties began to learn how to preserve the social courtesies in spite of clashes of opinion. Barnes mentions the case of a dissenter who was present when a health to the Church of England was proposed. Everyone watched with interest to see how he would behave when his turn came. He drank the health of the Church -- it needed nothing so much as health, he said, since that was what it chiefly lacked.² Barnes himself governed his dealings with others on the principle that all godly men were united in that which made them godly,³ and the effect was

1. A Journal of the Life of that Ancient Servant of Christ, John Gratton, p.126

2. Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, p. 83

3. Ibid, p.139.

seen in his relations with conformists. One of his best friends, was a certain "Mr. P.", a zealous churchman, who, without Barnes' knowledge, for a long time paid the weekly fine of twelve pence due from Barnes because of absence from the parish church. "The good man knew his friend's nonconformity proceeded from no sectarian sourness, but an invincible dissatisfaction with the terms of communion required in the Church of England."¹ Nor is this an isolated case. Again and Again we find similar cases in the records of the Quakers -- the most intransigent of the sects. The seventeenth century has given us few more attractive pictures of village life than John Gratton's description of how his neighbours tried to shield him from the consequences of dissent. First they offered to pay the fine and let Gratton return it as he was able; next they proposed to seize all his goods and so keep them out of the bailiff's hands. Even the constable suggested that Gratton should shut the door against him, which he would regard as discouragement sufficient to forestall further action on his part. When Gratton proposed an inventory of his goods and an auction, the neighbours threatened such dire consequences² to would-be purchasers that nothing could be sold. Equally striking is the account of the relations between John Roberts, another Quaker,

1. Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, p. 150
2. John Gratton's Journal, pp.142-4.

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and Bishop Nicholson of Gloucester, while at the very end of the period we have John Whiting's charming account of his visit to the Bishop of Bath and Wells. From some question immediately at issue, the discussion turned to the controversial matter of oaths. "And as I came away he came to his palace gate with me, and just as I took leave of him, I said, 'Well, we have this to say for ourselves, that inasmuch as we have such express command of Christ on our side, we deserved to be judged charitably of that we were so tender of breaking it.' At which the bishop looked pleasantly on me, and as if he had assented or had nothing to say contrary, laid his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Well, pray God bless you.' And so we parted very friendly, as indeed he always was to me, desiring me to come and see him whenever I came to town, and invited me to come and dine with him (and 'twas said he delayed his dinner two hours to look for me one first day after meeting), but I never made so bold with him as that, though I often went to visit him." In each of these cases, the generous attitude of churchmen may have been a response to high qualities of sincerity, integrity, courage and honesty. But this in itself was only possible because as men lived together in more settled times they learned that ecclesiastical

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1. Some Memoirs of the Life of John Roberts, pp.21ff, 28, 33.
The story of the visit of the bishop and his retinue to Roberts' farm is particularly delightful.
 2. John Whiting - Persecution Exposed, in some memoirs relating to the sufferings of John Whiting and many others of the people called Quakers, p.244.

differences in religious emphasis did not prevent them from finding a certain common ground. The respect which churchmen were constrained to yield to the leaders of dissent they finally learned to give to the ordinary members also, and the natural expression of this feeling was the legal toleration which ends our period.

In addition, a variety of miscellaneous forces were at work. Persecution was admittedly unpleasant for the victims, but often it proved disagreeable enough for those who enforced it. It had a disconcerting habit of recoiling on its perpetrators. The nonconformist was apparently left with no means of defence, but he learned ways of retaliating. On January 30, 1678/9, Sir Charles Lyttleton wrote to Hatton appealing for his aid on behalf of a distressed clergyman of his acquaintance. This unfortunate man had "a very factious parish," and when he took steps against the fanatics, "he caused such a malice and combination against him that they will never leave him, joining in a common purse to persecute him with continual lawsuits, not only to the disgust but utter ruin of the poor man." The case was to come before Sir William Scroggs, and a word from Hatton would ensure that the minister "may not be oppressed by a company of fanatic rogues, he desiring nothing but equal justice and a fair end of the business." ¹ In his zeal the minister

1. The Hatton Correspondence, I, p.172.

had brought on himself a good deal more than he had expected, and it is safe to assume that, once clear of lawsuits, he would be careful not to disturb nonconformists needlessly. This may not be the best way of teaching tolerance, but it had a certain limited effectiveness.¹

In enforcing the policy of persecution, the role of the justice was, as we have seen, of crucial importance. If he wished to cooperate, the penal laws against dissenters could be enforced; if he declined to take part, the laws remained in abeyance. At the beginning of the period, he was often as eager as anyone else to harry the nonconformists,² but as the motive of revenge died out, the justice found himself in a difficult and disagreeable position. Persecuting inoffensive people -- however mistaken they might seem to be -- was a task of which the man of normally decent instincts soon grew weary. The Quakers, in fact, virtually won for nonconformists the right to maintain their own forms of worship because they exhausted the malice of the justices of the peace.

Moreover, with the passage of time the disagreeable features of the system became more and more aggravated. The emergence of the informer was in itself enough to discredit the policy of repression.

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1. cf. the similar case mentioned by C.E. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism, pp.371-2
 2. e.g., examples given by John Whiting, Baxter, Martindale, Barnes, Heywood, Gratton, &c.

John Gratton described a typical informer "as a dark ignorant fellow, as all informers are, else they would not be informers",¹ but his language is moderate in comparison with the terms in which some of his contemporaries describe informers.² The justices found themselves caught between these contemptible beasts of prey and the mounting pressure of a more sympathetic public opinion. When the two Derbyshire justices (Ashton and Ayre) refused to take action against the Quakers, they significantly appealed to the priest³ "to take some other way than informers." There are other instances where justices were equally severe with informers,⁴ and those charged with administering the penal laws were manifestly growing thoroughly tired of the discreditable colleagues with whom they were supposed to work. At the same time the growing weight of public resentment made it easier for the justices to refuse to co-operate with informers. Colchester, we are told, "would afford no informers, but two came out of Norfolk, and informed against one meeting;

1. Gratton, Journal, p.121

2. cf. Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol.I, p.490, cf. also Anthony a Wood: "Neither wanted there continual tell-tales and discoverers of conventicles in Oxon, though themselves were drunkards and swearers."

Note the following extract from a contemporary tract, given in Fox's Journal: "An Informer of the baser sort is one of the devil's nut-hooks, a privileged trepan or a common barrator under pretence of authority, a pettifogging caterpillar... he ferrets a conventicle just as a polecat does rabbits in their burrows; and the rich men there skulk down in their pews when they see him come in, dreading him more than a partridge does a hawk, or a city crack a marshall's man." Quoted from the Cambridge edition of Fox's Journal by W.C.Braithwaite, Second Period of Quakerism, p.78

3. Gratton, Journal, p.126

4. cf. The Life of Richard Davies of Welshpool, p.145.

but the rabble stoned them so much that they desired to know of the mayor where they might lodge safe. He told them he knew nowhere safer than in the town gaol, so thither they went and got away very¹ early in the morning..."

Many factors were responsible for the general weariness of the whole policy of persecution. It had failed of its purpose; it was distasteful to those who had to enforce it; it was out of keeping with the new temper which was gaining ground; it ran counter to the realignment of political forces. Men were ready to abandon the policy of repression, and after 1688 they had an added and powerful inducement. With William III on the throne, the king himself was in outlook and sympathy a nonconformist. "At his first coming," remarked Reresby, "the prince seemed to countenance the Presbytery² more than the Church of England, which startled the clergy." A little later Danby confided to Reresby that "he had told His Majesty that he saw he did all things to encourage Presbytery and dishearten the Church of England, and that he would absolutely prejudice himself and his government by it."³ Politicians who were anxious to be on the side favoured by royalty attacked the Church of England in parliament; according to their opponents they hoped thereby to win the fa-

1. The First Publishers of Truth, p.95

2. Reresby, p.425

3. Reresby, p.441.

¹
vour of a Calvinistic King. The personal religion of the king was only likely to influence public policy when his wishes coincided with those of his people. James II was a Roman Catholic, but failed to gain concessions for the papists. William III was a Calvinist, and parliament granted a toleration to nonconformists. This was not primarily because he wished it, nor because the party most likely to resist had promised it already, but because the people of England were ready to accept it.

1. Reresby, p.450.

CHAPTER ELEVEN. ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS.

I. THE RISING FEAR OF ROMANISM.

The roots of anti-Roman feeling extend far back in English life. During the middle ages, England was bound to the Holy See by the ties of religious loyalty, but England's rulers resented and resisted any papal encroachments in financial and political affairs.¹ The Reformation added religious sanction to an old antipathy, and the Catholic threat to national security -- whether from foreign rulers or from disaffected subjects -- made opposition to the Roman Church the most deep-seated of all the passions of the ordinary Englishman.

In the Restoration period, the hatred of Roman Catholicism was already a fact of long standing. The political effects of this antipathy continued to operate in English life for a century and a half after the Revolution of 1688. There was no decisive change of outlook such as marked the relations of the Church of England with the nonconformists. With regard to the Catholics there was no restatement of the issue corresponding to the Act of Uniformity; there was no attempt to apply a new policy -- such as the use of persecution to enforce conformity²; there was no redefinition of the situation comparable in importance to the Act of Toleration. Nevertheless, the Restoration period was an era of considerable importance in the relation of the Church of England to the Roman Catholics. Though marked by no conspicuous changes, it witnessed

1. Cf. Z. N. Brooke, The English Church and the Papacy (Cambridge, 1931), passim.

2. It is true that repressive policies resulted in occasional conversions from Romanism (cf. Cal. St.P.Dom, Charles II, Sept.1 1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.242; also Hist. MSS Comm., Report XI, Ap.V, p.239), but both the nature and purpose of the government's action were different from the policy represented by the series of acts aimed against nonconformists.

significant fluctuations in the intensity of national feeling, and the period ended with a crisis so intense that its ~~memory~~ unquestionably prolonged Catholic disabilities until the nineteenth century.

The Interregnum had served to push the Roman issue temporarily into the background of men's minds. There had been no doubt as to the intensity of anti-Catholic feeling among the Puritans, but their very success -- and the way they had used it -- had for the moment made the Anglicans more apprehensive of Calvinists than of Catholics. The old fears remained, but new ones had been superimposed upon them. At the same time, however, many prominent Anglicans had seen the Roman system at close quarters, and the experience left a permanent impression. Cosin, Bramhall, Sancroft and many others had been exiles in Catholic countries, and their first-hand acquaintance with Romanism made them no more friendly to its claims, and even planted in high church minds a much more friendly attitude to continental protestants.¹ They had been forced to defend the Anglican position against an apparently triumphant foe, and the difficulties of the task show clearly enough in Bramhall's controversial writings.² Indeed, the immense corpus of later seventeenth century works of an anti-Roman nature opens with the books and pamphlets with which the Anglican exiles upheld their church. The experience left its mark; at first the Restoration leaders might find other antagonists who required their attention, but it was noticeable that Cosin was sharper in his opposition to the papists after 1660 than he had been before 1640. From time to time throughout

1. Cf. Cosin, Correspondence, p.xliii; also Works, Vol.IV, p.401; Remains of Dennis Grenville, Vol. II, pp. 27-9, 35f.

2. Bramhall, Works, Vol. I - III.

the Restoration period, first-hand experience of the Catholic system on the continent heightened the antipathies of English travellers. Though no longer in an insecure position, they noted conditions in France and Italy, and had no desire to see them reproduced in England.¹

Nevertheless the chief struggle had latterly been with Puritanism not with Popery. The Romanists may have triumphed over Anglicans in their humiliation, but the defeat had not been of their making. The English Roman Catholics had been faithful to the royalist cause, and in his moment of greatest need they had conspicuously aided Charles II. At the time of the Restoration, the fear uppermost in men's minds was a resurgence of Puritanism. The "army of the saints" had just been disbanded, and the spectre of ex-Cromwellian troopers haunted the dreams of those responsible for the stability of the new regime. In comparison with the possibility of a Puritan rising, the fight with Rome seemed to be a theoretical controversy -- a paper warfare with theological opponents.

Yet there are abundant signs that the antipathies which had been pushed into the background retained all their former strength. Charles was scarcely settled on his throne before anti-Roman works began to issue from the presses. There was an uneasy conviction that the late disturbances

1. Cf. Clarke and Foxcroft, Life of Burnet, p.

2. Cf. Isaac Basire's The Ancient Liberty of the Britannick Church, and the Legitimate Exemption thereof from the Roman Patriarchate, &c (1660). Note also the care and firmness with which the main lines of Anglican orthodoxy as defined in the sixteenth century were drawn in the works of Sanderson and Jeremy Taylor.

had strengthened Romanism in England, and that consequently trouble lay ahead.¹

Mr. Pepys recorded a conversation with his wife in bed, and noted with grave concern her Romish inclinations. He always hailed with satisfaction anything that suggested a firmer attitude toward the

Catholics.² The concern of the ordinary people soon found emphatic expression through their elected representatives. There is no mistaking the sharpness of Parliament's abhorrence of the Puritans; it is not always recognized how quickly its members showed an equally intense antipathy to Catholics. In the case of so loyal an Anglican body, both reactions were natural, but at least it is clear that from the very outset Parliament was determined that the Church of England -- and the state system of which it formed so important a support -- should be unequivocally Protestant in character.³

It was inevitable that the issue should rapidly acquire political importance. Charles II was so adroit as a tactician that he kept his ultimate intentions carefully disguised, but his sympathy with Roman Catholics was clear, and their fate was soon involved in the struggle between King and Parliament. Both disposition and experience prompted Charles to seek some mitigation of Catholic disabilities. He had found

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1. Cf. Baxter's conviction, that the excesses of the wilder sects had inclined many to Romanism (The Saints' Everlasting Rest, Preface). Note also Clarendon's Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet Against Mr. Cressey (1673), p.168 : many people, he remarks, who had been driven into exile by the Civil Wars had apostasized to Rome because of pressure or out of despair; those at home, "and even many of the wild sectaries, after dancing through many changes of opinion, were naturally led to rest in the pretensions of infallibility."
 2. Pepys, Diary (Wheatley's edition, 1893f), Vol.Iv, p.82, also p.225; Vol. III, pp.40, 45, 59, 80, 82, 99, &c.
 3. Ranke, History of England, Vol.III, p.400 ; Pepys, op.cit., Vol.III, pp. 52, 61, 189, &c.

his Catholic subjects loyal and he trusted them; during his exile he had found shelter in Catholic countries; his temperament was such that any religious promptings he felt were best satisfied by Roman ministrations.¹ He quite clearly desired a religious settlement that would grant concessions both to Protestant dissenters and to Roman Catholics. Moreover, the interplay of political forces made him anxious to find some body of opinion that would offset the intense Anglicanism of his parliament. Sometimes he turned to the nonconformists, sometimes to the Catholics. Because he also looked abroad for help, and received it from the King of France, he found further arguments for seeking concessions for Catholics at home. But the fact that his designs were suspected -- and in part known -- made the nonconformists less and less willing to help him, and increased the restiveness of his Anglican subjects.

Among those who surrounded the king there were men and women far more deeply committed than he was to schemes for improving the position of Roman Catholicism in England. Whereas the king might countenance or encourage such plans for reasons of expediency, others supported them because of conviction. There was an ardent Catholic circle in the court; from time to time its members were assisted by persons temporarily in positions of great influence or power. Many of the former exiles were sympathically disposed to Rome; the Queen Mother and her circle were deeply committed to advancing the Catholic cause. Both Arlington and Clifford were Catholics, and the latter at least threw himself with enthusiasm into the crusade. The influence of the royal mistresses was

1. On the King's religious views, cf. Halifax, Works (ed. by Raleigh), pp.187-191; Ranke, op.cit., Vol.III, p.397; Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II p.149

also a factor that had to be considered, and in due course the Duke of York became the centre of Catholic activity, and (in the eyes of the common people) the symbol of Catholic aims. From the beginning of the period, the possibilities of gaining concessions began to be explored. In so far as they were serious, they must have had the cognisance of the king, but the initiative probably came from the court circle. In the French archives, there is a draft of a suggested agreement between the Holy See and England.¹ Its aim was to end the Anglican schism, but it presupposed such wide concessions on both sides that it is chiefly important as indicating the kind of scheme that court circles in England were considering. It illustrates, moreover, the remarkable degree to which ardent Catholics underestimated the force of Protestant sentiment among the English people. This, more than anything else, explains the meagre success of the plans so industriously pursued in certain quarters throughout the next thirty years. The most eager champions of concessions for the Catholics condemned their proposals to futility because they were not content with schemes which bore any relation to the realities of the English situation.

Charles himself, as we have already noted, was primarily interested in the question because of its bearing on the balance of political forces, and it rapidly became a political issue of the first importance. The protestant sympathies of parliament were as unmistakeable as its royalist enthusiasm, but the relative power of king and parliament were not clearly defined. Most of the earlier moves of Charles to ease Catholic disabilities

1. "Oblatio ex parte Caroli II mag. Britanniae regis pro optatissima trium suorum regnorum cum sede apostolica Romana unione." (Dated Feb., 1663). French Archives, Angleterre, No. 81. Cf. Ranke, op.cit., Vol. III, p. 398f.

were tentative or even secret in character, but parliament began to take alarm. It was declared to be a punishable offence for any of his subjects to attribute to the king a wish to introduce popery into England.¹ When the Earl of Bristol opened his attack on Clarendon, one of the charges he laid was that the chancellor had sought to alienate the opeople's affections from their king by encouraging a belief that Charles favoured Romanism,² and the impeachment that finally brought about Clarendon's downfall repeated the accusation. Many even of the Catholics were willing to concede that overtures to Rome were contrary to the interests of the country. Bristol declared that he was a Catholic, but no adherent of the Roman court, and added that as a patriot he could not suffer popery to regain a footing in England.³ Whenever persecution revived, lesser Catholics were willing to affirm that their political loyalty to the crown made it natural to repudiate any suggestion that the pope could claim sovereign rights in England.⁴

Popular resentment, though not yet clamorous, was strong enough to defeat the first tentative schemes of the king to secure a more generous measure of religious comprehension. Efforts to relax Catholic disabilities led to sharp reaction in parliament. Sterner action was demanded against Catholic recusants;⁵ firmer declarations were issued against priests and

1. Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol. I, p.345f; for an echo of this, cf Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1666-7, Vol.CLXXII, 13.

2. L. J., Vol. XI, p.555.

3. Cf. Clarendon, Vol. III, p.292.

4. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Nov.1, 1673 to Feb.28, 1675, p.128.

5. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1667, Vol.CCXVI, 76.

Jesuits;¹ more rigorous methods were adopted to eliminate Catholic officers from the army.² The attitude of the king had already inspired a wide-spread popular belief that he intended to restore popery in England,³ and severer measures were greeted with delight.⁴ It is important to notice that even in these early efforts to modify the rigour of anti-papal measures, the question of the King's dispensing power had arisen. Clarendon had pointed out to Charles that though he could not repeal offending laws, he might suspend their operation, and in the upper house Lords Cooper and Roberts introduced a bill to authorize the king to dispense with laws which prescribed obedience to the discipline and doctrine of the Church of England.⁵ The proposed measure was defeated, but the issue thus raised remained of crucial importance until James II conclusively proved that the suggested method was both illegal and

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1. Cal.St.P.Dom, Charles II, 1666-7, Vol.CLXXVI, 45; Ibid, 1667, Vol.CXCVII? 21; Cf. Ibid, 1671,p.140, and Ibid, Marl to Oct.31,1673, p.124.
 2. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1667, Vol. CCXVII, 127; Ibid, 1667-8, pp.55,108, 110; Note also Ibid, 1667, Vol.CCVII, 112.
 4. Cf. Cal.St.P.Dom, Charles II, 1666-7, Vol.CLXXVIII, 88: (E.Bodham to Williamson, from Lynn, Nov.16) "the place is in good health, the militia well settled, and many satisfied at the proclamation for putting the laws in force against the Papists." Also Ibid, Vol.CLXXVIII, 103 (Sir G.Shakerley to Williamson, from Chester Castle, Nov.17) -- "The common people are largely satisfied at the proclamation for putting the laws in force against the papists, because of many late rumours of papist plots..." Pepys, as always, is vivid and illuminating. Diary, Vol.III, p.82 : "He (Sir. William Penn) told me that this day the king hath sent to the House his concurrence wholly with them against the popish priests, Jesuits, &c, which gives great content, and I am glad of it." Ibid, Vol. III, p.52: "Among other things, he (Sir W. Wheeler) tells me that he hears the Commons will not agree to the king's late declaration, nor will yield that the Papists have any ground given them to raise themselves up again in England, which I perceive by my Lord (Sandwich) was expected at Court."
 3. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom, Charles II, 1666-7, pp.206, 273.
 5. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report VII, p.167.

ineffective.

Comparatively early in the Restoration period, another factor of great importance began to operate. At home the king's more lenient policy had been obstructed, but foreign influences were also at work. In the negotiations which ended the First Dutch War, the power of France began to be effective even in English affairs, and more was implied than stated in Louis XIV's undertaking to support all interests that Charles II might have within or beyond his own realm.¹ Much would follow from this promise, and for some years it remained crucial in all plans for the relief of Catholics. For the present we need only notice that the bare suspicion of such designs was enough to alarm the average Englishman. The struggle between two protestant powers appeared as part of a sinister scheme to weaken both in the interests of Catholicism.² France and popery were linked as allied sources of danger to the life and faith of the English people.³

The tension between the king and his parliament showed no signs of decreasing, and, with the assurance of outside help, it was natural for Charles to revert to his Catholic policy. It was also plausible to hope for real advantage from supporting a cause so powerfully espoused by the leading continental powers. Early in 1669, Arundel went to France

1. Cf. Lettres de Turenne, Vol. I, p.664.

2. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1666-7, Vol.CLXXXVII, 167.

3. Cf. letter from T. Holden (Falmouth, Mar.17) to Hickes, Cal.St.P. Dom., Charles II, 1667-8, p.293. Note also Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1667, Vol.CCVIII, 111 : Letter dated Weymouth, July 6, from C. S(awtell) to Edm. Sawtell -- "...the country militia came together in a sudden and wonderful manner, showing much magnanimity and resolved courage against French and Papists, which is indeed the country's greatest obstacle."

with proposals which implied that England could again be drawn (though with certain mild conditions) within the Catholic fold. Negotiations were extremely secret in character, and for a time the English representatives flattered themselves with the highest hopes. Arlington even persuaded himself at one stage that parliament could be won over to a union with France, and even to the acceptance of Catholicism.

This was wishful thinking of the most unrealistic kind. Public opinion reacted quickly and strongly to the suspicion that Catholic schemes were in the air. From exile Lord Clarendon sent his daughter serious warning of the evil caused by the rumour that she had apostasized to Rome, and he pointed out the serious consequences that would follow if the report proved true.¹ The contents of the Treaty of Dover rapidly became an open secret,² and public dismay rose sharply. The increase in the number of Catholic chapels, the presence of Catholic priests and Jesuit fathers, the encouragement of a Catholic heirarchy in Ireland, the persecution of Protestants in France all increased the prevailing alarm. The Duchess of York had become a Catholic, Romainist ministers were in high places, and the zeal of the heir to the throne was becoming clearer day by day. The state papers of the time bristle with accounts of restiveness over the popish danger, and urgent addresses were forwarded to the king.

The court, however, persevered in its policy. Arlington again

1. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1670, p605-6: "If you embrace the Church of Rome, you bring irreparable dishonour to your father and your husband, and ruin on your children..."

2. Feiling, op.cit., p.148.

discussed with France the safeguards under which Catholicism could be reintroduced in England, and Charles asked for a learned theologian (who, as a blind, must be interested in physical science) who might secretly discuss doctrine with him, and resolve his doubts on certain important points.¹ The relation of the Catholic scheme to the feud with parliament became continually clearer, and the Duke of York went so far as to declare that king and parliament could no longer exist side by side in England.² Under these circumstances, the king issued his famous Declaration of Indulgence (1672). In due course there followed the war with Holland. Clifford, Arlington, and the Duke of York all regarded the struggle as a necessary condition of the success of the Catholic scheme, and the public was restive and unhappy because it suspected that this was the true purpose of the war.³

Public fear and anger were further heightened by the indecisive nature of the fighting. So far from making Charles independent of parliament and able to dictate terms to it, the war had compelled him to seek its help. Even Louis XIV secretly advised Charles to submit temporarily to the demands of the people. With what dignity he could command, the king revoked the Declaration of Indulgence, and announced that it would not be cited in the future as a precedent. Probably no one believed that the question of the king's dispensing power had been finally

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1. It is important to notice that Feiling fixes 1672 as the date at which the Roman danger began to be acute, op.cit., p.133.
 2. Cf. Colbert's despatch, quoted in Ranke, op.cit., Vol. III, p.521.
 3. In the Correspondence of Joseph Williamson there are frequent references to the prevalence of this belief. Note also the very vehement pamphlet in Cal.St.P.Dom, Charles II, Nov.1,1673 to Feb.28,1675, p.128f. The work was published in January 1674, bears the title Verbum Sapienti, and is an address to the Lords and Commons on the iniquities of the war.

settled, but for the moment, the mounting tension was relieved. In parliament the opposition declared itself satisfied, and in the streets the people lighted bonfires in celebration.¹

But after the first outburst of satisfaction, parliament seriously set itself to the task of dealing with the popish menace. In the lower House, Nicholas Carew declared that their aim was to make the Protestant church so strong that it would never stand in need of toleration from the Catholics.² Almost at once the state papers begin to reflect the haste with which parliament pressed on a bill "for preventing dangers which may happen from popish recusants."³ The result was the famous Test Act of 1673. This was by no means the last time that methods of excluding the Catholics from places of influence were debated in parliament,⁴ but it is notable for two reasons. It was chiefly obnoxious -- though doubtless chiefly effective as well -- because it introduced the explicit repudiation of transubstantiation as a test for eligibility to office.⁵ It also led immediately to the resignation of Clifford and the Duke of York.⁶

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1. Cf. Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, pp.x-xii; cf. also Colbert's despatch to Louis XIV in Dalrymple, Memorials of Great Britain, Vol. II, Appendix, p.90.
 2. A. Grey, Debates of the House of Commons, Vol. II, p:35.
 3. Cf. L. J., Vol.XII, pp. 618, 625-8, 632; C. J., Vol. IX, p.303f.
 4. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1,1675 to Feb.29,1676, pp.100, 114, 119, 129 -- the account of proceedings in the upper House in connection with a bill "for the Better Securing the Protestant Religion." Cf. also, Hist. Mss. Comm., Report XI, Appendix II, pp.63, 72, 105,209, 220.
 5. The clause was added during debate at the suggestion of an obscure member named Harwood, and he was supported by Sir William Coventry on the grounds that there could be no papal dispensation from such an oath.
 6. For the excitement that this caused, cf. Evelyn, Diary (Everyman), Vol.II, p.88. Also Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol.I, pp.6,7,21,24,47,51.

The realization that the heir to the throne was a convert to the Church of Rome heightened Protestant apprehensions. It was now apparent that it was only a matter of time until the immense prerogatives which attached to kingly power would be wielded by a man who displayed all the fanaticism of a recent convert to Catholicism. As yet there was no agreed method of meeting the danger, and the proposal to exclude him from the succession still lay in the future. But the prospect became more serious when it was known that James was contemplating a second marriage. Some hoped he might find a Protestant wife; when his choice fell on Mary of Modena there was a sharp outburst of resentment. Williamson's correspondents immediately noted the popular dissatisfaction, both with her religious beliefs and with the French influence which was believed to lie behind her choice. "A prince in Italy, according to the thinking of ordinary people, is too near the Holy See of Rome, and a marriage proposed and concluded by the French cannot be good."¹ Popular opposition to the match, writes another correspondent, was only natural in view of the general "averseness to both France and Popery, the later of which is the general echo of every place."² There was an immediate demand that parliament should intervene,³ and coffee house politicians began to speculate about the "dire things that must be done against the Roman Catholics."⁴ Wilder and wilder became the rumours which flew about.

1. Yard to Williamson, Aug. 4, 1673, Letter to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol. I, p.143.

2. Ibid, Vol. I, p.144.

3. Ibid, Vol. I, p. 138.

4. Ibid, Vol. I, p. 145; cf. also pp. 151, 194.

Sir Nicholas Armourer reported to Williamson that in Yorkshire the common people believed that the Duke was going to marry the pope's eldest daughter.¹ When it was known that the future duchess would be accompanied by her mother, high fears were entertained as to what a niece of the pope would attempt on behalf of English Catholics.² When parliament met there was an immediate outburst of indignation. "No sooner was the Speaker in his chair but Mr. Powell declared the whole nation was full of the resolution of his Highness to marry the Princess of Modena, who being a papist, gave so great disturbance to the minds of the Commons of England that he desired an address might be made to his Majesty to prevent the consummation of it."³ Sir Christopher Musgrove, a member of the House, reported to Williamson that the indignation of the Commons was such that "privy counsellors escaped not their fury, being termed villanous counsellors..⁴ Coventry opposed the granting of supply "before this Kingdom be effectually secured from the dangers of popery and popish counsels and counsellors." Parliament was hastily prorogued, and the king, eager to still the rising storm, promised strong proclamations against the Catholics.⁵

The remarriage of the Duke of York is important because it clearly indicates the nature and extent of the increasing fear of Roman Catholicism. For the past seven years hostility to the Catholics had steadily gained

1. Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol. II, p.27; also cf. p.63

2. Ibid, Vol. II, p.36.

3. Ibid, Vol.II, p.52; Cf.also p.49.

4. Ibid, Vol. II, p.59.

5. Ibid, Vol. II, p.67.

ground as the designs of the court became more widely known. Magistrates showed greater zeal in prosecuting recusants.¹ The public was more and more ready to seize on rumours of Catholic activity and to spread them.² Reports that the king was really a Romanist reappeared,³ and people believed that "the government grows popish."⁴ Increasingly the rumours acquired political significance, and opponents of the government were hailed as Protestant champions.⁵ The pulpits turned their attention more and more to the dangers of Catholic encroachment, and we have the beginnings of that sustained polemic against popery which was so characteristic a feature of the church life of the next twenty years.⁶ It became an increasingly popular sport to burn the pope in effigy, and we are even assured that a profitable trade in stuffed popes developed.⁷ In reporting London news to Williamson on Dec. 5, 1673, Thomas Derham notes that "our citizens are making of the Pope's effigies and martyring him with great ceremony on every occasion of a bonfire, and...it so pleases the vulgar that many country people come up purely out of curiosity to see

1. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1666-7, Vol. CLXXXIX, 2.

2. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1666-7, Vol. CLXXV, 26; Vol. CLXXIII, 79; Ibid, 1667, Vol. CCXXI, 57; Ibid, 1667-8, pp. 354, 161, &c.

3. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1667, Vol. CCXIV, 80.

4. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1667, Vol. CCVIII, 47.

5. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1666-7, Vol. CXCIII, 86; Ibid, Nov. 1, 1673 to Feb. 28, 1675, pp. 102, 103, 106.

6. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., 1666-7, Vol. CLXXVII, 80: "Yesterday, being Gunpowder treason day, the ministers in the several parishes, and especially the Bishop of Winchester at Whitehall, set forth the practises of the papists on that occasion, showing that they still retain the same principles."

7. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Nov. 1, 1673 to Feb. 28, 1675, p. 41 -- letter (continued on the next page)

a Pope, inquiring whereabouts lives a pope-maker, with such zeal that one would guess they would bind their children apprentices to the trade."¹

Whenever popular indignation became too clamorous or parliament showed itself particularly uneasy, the king took steps to settle the unrest. He was lavish with his promises of sterner measures. "It shall be your fault," he said in his speech to both Houses of parliament on Nov. 4, 1673, "if the laws against Popery be not effectually put in execution. I assure you I shall do my part to testify my zeal against the growth of Popery."² "We spend our time as well as we can," reports Coventry to Williamson a month later, "towards sweetening the humour against the next meeting (of parliament), daily increasing the King's commands for executing the rigour against Catholics."³ Shortly after the attack on M. de Luzancy, a French Protestant refugee, had again aroused the anger of the Commons,⁴ the king ostentatiously sought the counsel of the bishops. "That I would do all I could to suppress the growth of popery," he wrote, "and therefore think it fit to have the

(continuation of note 7 on the previous page): letter of William Overbury to Williamson -- "I find making of Popes a great trade here, and burning them as great a diversion. The night the Duchess arrived, a Pope of £50 was burnt in Southwark." In The Hatton Correspondence, Vol.I, p.203, there is a reference to the burning of effigies on Queen Elizabeth's birthday; the estimated cost of two effigies (one of the pope) was £100.

1. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Nov.1,1673 to Feb.28,1675, p.44.
2. L. J., Vol. XII, p.593. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Nov.1,1673 to Feb. 28, 1675, p.6.
3. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Nov.1,1673 to Feb.28,1675, p.57.
4. Cf. Reresby's account of his part in this famous episode, The Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, p.98f; note also Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1,1675 to Feb.29, 1676, p.389.

advice and assistance of as many of the bishops as can conveniently be got together. And I would have you debate and consider among yourselves what I can do for the effectual preventing of that danger and the preserving of the Church of England as it is now established by law, and I would have you let me know as soon as you can, what it is you would offer in order to these ends."¹

The bishops were quick to comply, and put forward six suggestions as to ways and means of controlling the Catholic menace.² But Charles II had relied too often on the same method of exercising the demon of fear. When the Catholic tendencies of his policy had aroused public feeling, he always promised more rigorous measures against the papists, always protested his desire to maintain the true Protestant faith. Each time they were repeated, the king's assurances carried less conviction. "The people," wrote Coventry, "have received such strange impressions as to religion and property that no professions of his Majesty of securing them for the future could at present cure their umbrages."³

This was the nemesis of Stuart promises. The most solemn assurances were seen only in the light of political tactics; they could be hastily made in a crisis, and forgotten or ignored when the need was past. Long before James II came to the throne, the people of England had

1. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Nov.1, 1673 to Feb.28, 1675, p.548.

2. The bishops' grateful acknowledgement of the king's "great sense and care of religion" is given on p.549 of the above cited volume of Cal. St. P. Dom.; their advice regarding means of checking the growth of popery is given on p.549, while appropriate methods of giving effect to this advice are suggested on p.550. Consequent proclamations against recusants, priests, Jesuits, &c, are found on pp. 567, 571.

3. Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol. II, p.65.

been taught that the promises of Stuart kings were worthless.¹

During the years which intervened between the remarriage of the Duke of York and the discovery of the Popish Plot, the fear of Catholicism did not abate. Parliament, uneasily obsessed with the danger of Romanism, continued to study ways and means of strengthening the laws against Catholics;² the stream of anti-papal pamphlets increased, and the populace continued to demonstrate their Protestant loyalties on all conceivable occasions.³ We may pause, however, to notice the effect to date of the Catholic policy of the Court. It had made the king thoroughly suspect, and had seriously undermined the authority of his word. The Duke of York, while rapidly removing any doubts as to his convictions, was increasing the apprehension with which the people looked forward to the prospect of a Catholic king. It had been Charles' policy to play off one religious group against another for political ends, but he had succeeded in giving to the government an entirely Protestant character, and he had gone far to bring the Anglicans and Presbyterians closer together. Schemes

1. Cf. the reaction of Robert Yard, one of Williamson's clerks, to a royal proclamation against the Catholics: "This would indeed give great satisfaction to the people could they believe the king's command in this particular would be punctually executed, but they have seen so many proclamations and orders which have hardly been remembered some days after they were published, that they will not take much notice of this till they see the effect follow." Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson, Vol. II, p.74.

2. Cf. Cal.St.P.Dom., Charles II, Mar.1,1675 to Feb.29,1676, p.91: "An Act for the better and more speedy conviction of Roman Catholics, and the levying the forfeitures incurred thereon, &c." Cf. C. J., Vol.IX, p.320. Also note Cal.St. P.Dom., Mar.1,1676 to Feb.28,1677, pp.262, 349,386, 541-2;; Ibid, Mar.1,1677 to Feb.28, 1678, pp.24, 45.

3. Cf. "Speech Intended to be Delivered at the Common Hall held July 20,1676", in Cal.St.P.Dom., Charles II, Mar.1,1676 to Feb.28,1677, p.345; cf. also Ibid, Mar.1,1677 to Feb.28,1678, pp.339,369, 388, 407,428,629.

of comprehension might fail, but in due course the Act of Toleration would be possible because of the effects wrought by the fear of Popery. Most important of all were the consequences of the French alliance. The people of England suspected more than they knew, and often their suspicions were surprisingly near the truth. The dependance of Charles II on Louis XIV has been described by Ranke as the crowning folly of a king who in other ways had shown himself an adroit and skilful politician. At the same time, the political realities of the situation must not be overlooked. The Catholic policy of the king was only one part of an extremely intricate game of strategy. Parliament, for all its royalist ardour, had never appreciated the king's administrative needs and so had failed to give him adequate financial support. The negotiations with France were necessary if Charles were to secure the loans he wanted, and the condition of securing financial aid was to offer concessions for the Catholics. It is impossible to estimate to what extent Charles was ever sincere in assuring Louis XIV that he was interested in the Church of Rome and anxious to ease the disabilities of his Catholic subjects. His astuteness is reflected in the fact that he so seldom let his real mind be known that even contemporaries were left to draw such inferences as they could. Had it been possible for Charles to secure what he needed without recourse to foreign courts, it would have been egregious folly to alienate his people by turning to France. But he could not get at home what he did get abroad. The measure of his triumph is the simple fact that till the day of his death he neither granted the Catholics the respite which he

so often promised, nor forfeited the French pension which was dependant on the Catholic promises which he offered but never gave.

This much, at least, is clear: when the outcome of the Dutch War made it impossible to hope that absolute government could be established in England on a Catholic basis and with French aid,¹ the policy of Charles altered. He still looked for French support and he still held out hopes of Catholic concessions, but the important fact is that he employed Danby as his chief minister. Danby was opposed both to the French alliance and to schemes of toleration. Protestant enthusiasts still sought sterner measures against the Catholics, and there is no evidence that the king was actively pursuing contrary schemes. There is no doubt, however, that the Catholics themselves were working for the consummation of their ends, but they now pinned their hopes, not to the king, but to his brother. The story of their earlier intrigues can be traced in Coleman's correspondence;² after 1675 the evidence becomes more precarious. There is, however, no doubt that a popish plot existed, even though it did not correspond to the one that Titus Oates disclosed.³ The English Roman Catholics might be united in their faith, but they were certainly divided as to their policy. Many of them were anxious to be peaceable citizens; they would have been willing to take the oath of allegiance, and looked chiefly for concessions which would allow them to adhere to their church without being exposed

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1. That this was Charles' hope and intention is argued by Lord Acton in Lectures on Modern History; cf. also his Secret History of Charles II in Home and Foreign Review, Vol. I, p.146. Cf. Ranke, op.cit., Vol.IV, p.384f.
 2. This has been brilliantly done in Pollock, The Popish Plot, pp.15-49.
 3. Cf. Stoughton, Ecclesiastical History of England, (revised edition), Vol. IV, pp.7-9.

to persecution. But the Jesuits and their adherents entertained more ambitious hopes, and proposed vigorous measures to attain them. In the reign of Charles II we are consequently faced with that cleavage which became marked in the reign of his brother. It was already clear, moreover, that the Jesuits (probably because of their foreign training) consistently failed to appreciate the forces at work in English life. They were immersed in political schemes and did not sufficiently allow -- either now or later -- for the forces which moulded public opinion. Certainly they never showed any adequate understanding of what ends could be attained, nor of the means which were likely to accomplish them. As to the exact nature of their plans we can only conjecture, but a strong case can be made for the belief that when the average Englishman suspected the Jesuits he did so with good reason. Both their convictions and their outlook made them incorrigible political schemers, and their designs were, under any interpretation of existing laws, well beyond the borders of treason.

The details of the Plot -- the charges and countercharges to which it led, the trials in which it issued -- are not our concern, but it is necessary to notice its immense effect on public opinion. From the outset doubts were cast on the authenticity of Oates' story; the king was sceptical, and the Duke of York (who at least knew something of what was in the background) assured his son-in-law that "when this affair is thoroughly examined it will be found nothing but malice against the poor Catholics in general and myself in particular."¹ Williamson, with the care of a meticulous civil

1. Letter of the Duke of York to the Prince of Orange, Oct.18,1678, Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31, 1678, p.466.

servant, noted the distinction between the general issue ("the priests' and recusants' designs to change religion") and the particular problem raised by Oates' disclosures.¹ The people at large, however, accepted without reservation the reality of the plot. The popular excitement was tremendous. "On the breaking up of the great Popish plot," writes a correspondent of Williamson, "the crack and noise filled us with great visions and apparitions of armed men assembled and riding by night, on which strong, strict watches were set, our militia drawn out, all Popish houses searched, and all in great rumour and expectation for ten or twelve days."² Priests and Jesuits immediately became the objects of intense suspicion;³ Luttrell even reports that some of them were seized and executed at once.⁴ Even diplomatic immunities were ignored, and the Spanish ambassador angrily protested that a sergeant and two musketeers had tried to push the search for Jesuits even within the walls of his house.⁵ The question of what constituted treason and of the kind of proof necessary to establish a charge became a matter of more than theoretical interest.⁶ Even to call a man a papist became an offence for which very

1. Notes by Williamson of a hearing before the three Chief Justices, Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31, 1678, p.465.

2. Henry Layton to Williamson, Rawden, near Leeds, Dec.9,1678, Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31,1678, p.565. Cf. Ibid, p.451.

3. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31,1678, pp.452,535; Ibid, Jan.1,1679 to Aug.31,1680, p.279.

4. N. Luttrell, Brief Historical Narration, Vol.I, pp.18, 20, 27.

5. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31, 1678, p.459.

6. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31, 1678, pp.471, 503.

heavy damages could be successfully demanded.¹ With public opinion in so excitable a state, the wildest rumours began to circulate. People heard with credulity of "a very damnable plot, contrived by one Edw. Fitzharris, a notorious papist," to rise and massacre the Protestants.² There was a report that work on St. Paul's had been suspended, "because there shall not be built such a cathedral for popery to be exercised therein."³ Even more fantastic were some of the proposals put forward. The Bishop of London received a letter urging that Rome be attacked from the Vatican side, or, alternatively, that forces, to be landed at Ancona, should march to Loretto, "and by surprise take and raze that nest of superstition, and bring away its treasure."⁴

As the excitement rose, the demands for action became irresistible. Proclamations were issued against Popish recusants,⁵ and stricter watch was kept on the actions of Catholic landowners.⁶ Safeguards were tightened against the abuse of the privilege of celebrating mass in the Queen's chapel and in the houses of foreign ambassadors.⁷ Popish peers became the object of attack, and steps were taken to purge the army of Roman Catholic officers. When the anti-Roman measures appeared half-hearted, public unrest at once increased. Members of parliament showed themselves very sensitive to the currents of public opinion; Luttrell assures us that the disclosure of the

1. Cal.St.P.Dom., Chas.II, Sept.1,1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.386.

2. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol.I, p.68.

3. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Jan.1,1679 to Aug.31,1680, p.23.

4. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31, 1678, p.590.

5. Cf. Cal. St. P. Dom, Mar.1 to Dec.31,1678, pp.514-5; Ibid, Jan.1,1679 to Aug.31,1680, p.135; Cf. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol.I, p.30.

6. Cal.St.P.Dom., Mar.1 to Dec.31,1678,p.566; Ibid, Jan.1,'79 to Aug.31,'80,p.35.

7. Cal. St. P. Dom.. Charles II, Mar.1 to Dec.31, 1678, p. 556.

plot created immediate unanimity in the House of Commons,¹ and when excitement increased parliament showed its concern by petitioning for a solemn fast day.² Charles, in spite of his initial scepticism, was quite prepared to adopt firmer measures in order to pacify unrest,³ the judges showed themselves more rigorous in prosecuting recusants, and the ministers of state joined in pressing for convictions.⁴

The Popish plot might easily have been simply one further episode in the series of events which marked the intensification of anti-Roman feeling. It led, however, to consequences which gave it unique importance. It brought to a head the movement to exclude the Duke of York from the succession to the crown. It led to the attempt to create, on religious grounds, a following for the Duke of Monmouth as a claimant to the throne. Both these movements were related to an even more significant development. Although the disclosure of the plot led in the first instance to a remarkable degree of unanimity in the House of Commons, one of the major political factions soon realized that the Catholic issue could be exploited for party purposes. The result of the attempt to do so largely determined the nature of political developments during the closing years of the reign of Charles II.

The exclusion issue had been raised before the discovery of the plot, but the excitement aroused by Oates' disclosures made it easy to

1. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p.2.

2. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Jan.1,1679 to Aug.31, 1680, p.110.

3. Cf. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol.I, p.2; Cal. St. P. Dom, Charles II, Sept.1 to Dec.31, 1681, p.185; Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1682, p.196.

4. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 112, 123.

raise a clamour about the religious convictions of the heir apparent. The Duke of York was neither popular nor wise, and the general feeling against his succession had rapidly been gaining ground. Shaftesbury and the Whigs were quick to see that a move to exclude him from the succession would embarrass the government and strengthen their own political position. In May 1679, the House of Commons gave second reading to a bill which stated the issue in no uncertain terms. "Agents of the pope," declared the preamble, "had seduced James, Duke of York to the communion of the Church of Rome, and prevailed on him to enter into negotiations with the pope and his nuncios, and to advance the power and greatness of the French king, to the end that by descent of the crown upon a papist, and by foreign alliances, they might be able to succeed in their wicked designs." Charles, however, intervened to prorogue and ultimately to dissolve parliament, and for the moment the scheme came to nothing. For more than a year, party warfare grew steadily more intense, and in November 1680 a second Exclusion Bill -- more drastic than its predecessor -- came before the new parliament. After an unusually bitter struggle, the influence of Halifax secured the defeat of the measure.¹ It is not necessary to examine in detail the proposed limitations put forward on both sides. Charles was firm in his refusal to give way. The exclusion attempt had, however, far-reaching results. A group of able and influential men were

1. Cf. the account in Foxcroft, Life and Letters of Sir George Savile, First Marquis of Halifax, Vol. I, p.233f. On the exclusion issue, note also Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Sept.1, 1680 to Dec.31,1681, pp. 68, 107, 173-4, 283.

irrevocably committed to opposition to James; they had been foiled for the moment, but they did not abandon their purpose, and in the future -- when James had advanced their cause more effectually than they themselves could have possibly have done -- they had their chance. James, moreover, allowed himself to take offence at the proposals Halifax put forward, and he never admitted to office one of the few men who might have helped him to avoid disaster.

The attempt to exclude the Duke of York made it necessary to put forward a rival claimant to the throne. The Duke of Monmouth, though no wiser than his uncle, was infinitely more popular, and the extremer Whigs pushed him forward as their candidate. For a period the rivalry between the brother and the son of Charles II had led to the banishment of both, but the king's alarming illness in 1680 brought them back to England. Monmouth's return was hailed in the City with bonfires and the ringing of bells.¹ The story of his mother's marriage to Charles was revived and in some quarters was readily believed.² It became necessary for the king to deny the rumour in the most formal and authoritative terms,³ but his attempts to renew his son's banishment failed. Instead, Monmouth set out on a tour of the western counties, and travelled in such state as was suitable only in the case of a successor to the crown.⁴ His Protestantism was stressed on all possible occasions,

1. Cf. The Hatton Correspondence, Vol.I, p.203; Evelyn, Diary, Vol.II, p.142.

2. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Jan.1,1679 to Aug.31,1680, p.460; this is one of many references to this rumour contained in this volume.

3. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Jan.1,1679 to Aug.31, 1680, p.502.

4. Notice the series of alarmed reports, sent by correspondents of the government, Cal.St.P.Dom., Charles II, Sept.1,1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.31, &c.

and "A Monmouth! A Monmouth! No York!" became a rallying cry for those opposed to the government or restive about its policies.¹

It was natural that the religious issue should assume a prominent place in the intricate party struggles that marked the closing years of the reign of Charles II. The more extreme members of the Whig party were quick to see the possibilities of a cry that awakened so eager a response among the common people, and for political purposes Shaftesbury and his associates made full use of the appeal to anti-Roman prejudice. Early in 1681 we begin to find in the state papers the first traces of agitation among "the factious parties."² Restless men -- so run the reports -- were emphasizing "the desperate condition of this kingdom by popery and the vile counsellors of his Majesty."³ Roger L'Estrange reported various demonstrations in which the ring leaders shouted for the overthrow of the Duke of York, and then called for cheers for Shaftesbury and the Whigs.⁴ Pamphlets circulated which openly incited the people to oppose the policy of the king. "If thou beest a true Englishman, neither Romanized nor Frenchified, and intendest to keep thy conscience as free as thou wast born, and meanest to transmit the same liberty to thy posterity which thy ancestors maintained, and wouldest not see thy children degenerated into French asses to draw some lustful

1. Cal.St.P.Dom., Charles II, Sept.1,1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.583; Ibid, 1682 p.246. There are several references in this volume to similar outbursts of popular enthusiasm for Monmouth and against York.

2. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Sept.1,1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.173-4. Note also Cal.St.P.Dom., Charles II, 1682, p.492.

3. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Sept.1,1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.174; also Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, 1682, p.246.

4. Cal. St. P. Dom., Sept.1,1680 to Dec.31,1681, p.583.

tyrant, goat or ape, in his domineering chariot, it concerns thee to know, if ever thou votest again as of late for a free parliament, that the persons named in this list are for the most part that seed by which the degenerate and now tottering ministers of Rome and France hope to propagate by money and gifts a fresh execrable generation of Roman and French ministers and pensioners."¹ This is the introduction to a long and bitter diatribe against Romanizing and Gallican influences in the government; with monotonous persistence the writer stresses the danger which faces liberty and Protestantism alike. In April 1682, the Whigs announced that they would hold a dinner, and contemporaries noted the political significance of the tickets issued: "It having pleased Almighty God by his wonderful providence to deliver and protect his Majesty's person, the Protestant religion and English liberties (hitherto) from the hellish and frequent attempts of their enemies (the papists)...."² The king intervened to ban the dinner. It was not often that the activities of the Green Ribbon Club were so openly provocative, but the general character of their designs were clear to all -- not least to so astute a politician as Charles II.

For a time, events favoured the Whigs. The execution of Stephen College aroused a good deal of resentment among ardent Protestants. Moreover, events in France were emphasizing in no uncertain way the insecurity of Protestants when they were completely at the mercy of

1. Advice to the Courteous Reader, cf. Cal. St. P. Dom., Charles II, Sept. 1, 1680 to Dec. 31, 1681, p.675.

2. N. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p.179.

a Catholic king. Refugees began to flock to England in increasing numbers, and the highest authorities in church and state supported the measures taken for their relief.¹ The bishop of London was particularly active in commending the collection in aid of refugees. From Paris Henry Savile wrote to his brother, Lord Halifax, a remarkable series of letters on the growing persecution of the Protestants.² When the judgment of the French bishops regarding the duty of their king to extirpate heresy became known in England, copies were eagerly circulated among churchmen, and the inferences to be drawn were carefully noted.³

At the same time, however, the signs of reaction were appearing. The excitements of the Popish Plot were over, and though it was still customary to stress the dangers of popery, the authorities began to take stronger measures against the nonconformists. At the Middlesex quarter sessions of October 1681, Sir George Jeffries "did in his charge speak against the papists and the dissenters, equally ranking them as mischievous to church and state."⁴ A few days later, Judge Jones, in addressing the grand juries of Middlesex, insisted that the statutes made against papists "extended to all dissenters, and they ought to present both alike."⁵ This was the beginning of greatly

1. Cf. Plumptre, Life of Ken, Vol. I, pp.239,242. Note also the frequent references to this subject in both Reresby and Bramston.

2. The Savile Correspondence, pp. 93, 98, 100, 209.

3. The Remains of Dennis Granville, Vol. I, p.213f.

4. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p.132.

5. Ibid, p. 141.

intensified proceedings against the nonconformists, and Luttrell's pages are full of references to the persecution which now broke out.¹ The political nature of this development was clear enough. The official policy, remarked Luttrell, "is made use of only as an engine to serve a turn, which is...to incapacitate dissenters to vote for any one, whereby the Tory party can procure such a common council as is fit for their turn."²

Under these circumstances, the discovery of the Rye House Plot was a stroke of rare good fortune for the king, and he exploited it with great astuteness for his own political ends. It was an important asset to him in his attempt to break the power of the opposition. The forces of the Whigs were completely scattered, and their supporters and dependents felt the full weight of official disapproval. Since the Whigs had courted the more extreme Protestants, the dissenters found themselves exposed to the full force of persecution. There was no suggestion, of course, that the papists should be granted any concessions, but the results of the Whig collapse momentarily made the nonconformists the object of official displeasure, and to that extent diverted the attention of the justices of the peace away from the Roman Catholics.

The final years of the reign of Charles II saw the complete triumph of the Tory party. The Whigs were discredited and dispersed; the extremer measures they had advocated were discountenanced, and consequently the unlimited abuse of popery fell temporarily into the background. It

1. Luttrell, op.cit., pp. 148, 151, 152, 156, 165, 167, 190, 216, 230, 231, 237, 242, 243, 245, 248, 250, 251, 254, &c.

2. Ibid, p. 242.

is true that thoughtful men still looked forward with apprehension to the days when a Catholic would be king. After a brief period of pre-occupation with the disloyalties of dissent, the Anglican pulpit returned to the attack on Romanism, and the flood of pamphlets gathered volume. In comparative quiet, however, the reign drew toward a close. But even a casual comparison with 1660 shows how vastly the complexion of public opinion had changed. In less than thirty years, the danger of Romanism had become one of the chief preoccupations of the average Englishman. The cry that popery was encroaching on English liberties could arouse excitement more quickly than any other slogan. One event after another fanned the flames of prejudice. Hatred of Rome and fear of its aggressive designs had steadily mounted. To refute Catholic claims had become with thoughtful Anglicans a duty of paramount importance. The political significance of Catholicism had become more pronounced. It had long been a settled conviction that Roman claims, together with the kind of allegiance demanded by the pope, made it impossible to trust the loyalty of Catholic subjects.¹ The knowledge that the court, and even the king, were plotting for the advancement of the Catholic cause gave new relevance to this firmly entrenched belief. The periodical alarm over Catholic plots -- real or fictitious -- increased the conviction that as a political force Romanism must be both carefully

1. For a reflection of this in the period under discussion, cf. Cal. St. P.Dom., Charles II, Nov.1,1673 to Feb.28,1675, p.553 -- Letter from Sir John Pettus to Justice Thomas Loane of Beccles (forwarded to Williamson by R. Bower, Jan.27,1675): "...I have a less doubt of prejudice from the other Dissenters than the Romanists, because they do not allow the very fundamentals both of our church and state, and so can never be true subjects to this crown, while they are subject to that religion..."

watched and firmly resisted. The rights and prerogatives of the English church were in jeopardy, and even the form of English government was threatened. Unbounded loyalty to the crown had been one of the pronounced features of the early years of the Restoration. In less than a generation many people had grown suspicious of the king's intentions and doubtful of the value of his word. The ardent Catholicism of the Duke of York had made it possible to advocate a control of the succession to the throne that would have been inconceivable in the first enthusiasm of the Restoration. Under Charles II, all schemes of this kind were frustrated, but they had proved that there were limits to loyalty, and they unquestionably prepared the way for later changes. But the Revolution would have been impossible had it not been for the history of mounting anti-Roman feeling that marked the reign of Charles II.

CHAPTER TWELVE. ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS.

II. JAMES II AND THE REVOLUTION.

James II received a heritage that any king might envy. With masterly skill, Charles II had used the Whig frenzy to usher in the Tory reaction. The enemies of prerogative had been overthrown, and the party in power had reverted to the shibboleths of unquestioning loyalty. Wisdom could have used the prevailing temper to secure any concessions that a reasonable man might ask; folly exasperated it to the point where a bloodless revolution overthrew the king himself. So vast a change within so short a time can only be explained in terms of the religious forces James aroused. Englishmen were willing to see their king an exile because they were not prepared to accept the Catholic policy he pursued. It is true that many other factors were involved. The apparent peace of the closing years of Charles II had not settled the questions it had temporarily shelved. The character of British constitutional practice had not been satisfactorily defined, and international problems of the first magnitude were still unsolved. But it was Catholicism which became the central issue, and inevitable changes were effected with surprising ease because of the nature of popular reaction to the spectre of Roman domination.¹

1. Cf. Lecky, England in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. I, p.10.

When James assured the privy council of his intention to uphold the Church of England, he may have promised more than he intended to fulfil, but the reaction to his words should have made him pause. The eagerness with which his ministers received his words and the delight with which the public hailed them when they appeared as a royal proclamation, should have convinced the king both of the support which loyalist sentiment would give him and of the unalterable desire to see the Protestant establishment maintained. His declaration confirmed the hope that though James would not change his religion, he had at least learned something of the religious outlook of his people. Even the highest Tories were staunch Anglicans, and their loyalty to the crown was always balanced by their loyalty to the church. "That the Protestant religion may be preserved," declared Seymour early in the reign, "I am for the preservation of the Crown."¹ The sons of Clarendon were eager to enjoy the fruits of high office, but nothing could in the last resort shake their devotion to Anglicanism.² Loyalty to the church was the one thing on which all branches of the Tory party were agreed. This was an obvious fact, but James consistently overlooked it.

At the outset the king evidently hoped to use the Church of England to secure concessions of his fellow Catholics. Loud protestations of

1. Grey, Debates of the House of Commons, Vol. VIII, p.76.

2. Cf. North on Rochester: "But his party was that of the Church of England, of which he had the honour for many years to be accounted the head." North, p.230.

loyalty deceived him as to the limits of what was really possible; in any case, the interpretation which he chose to place on the doctrine of passive obedience persuaded him that serious opposition was impossible. His first need was a parliament amenable to his wishes, and the elections provided him with a House of Commons almost fanatical in its loyalty. Yet even so obtuse a bigot as James should have noted that from the very first the fear of popery began to show itself. For the moment Monmouth's rebellion postponed the issue, and made it fatally easy for James to press forward with his reckless schemes. Yet even when men were loudest in proclaiming their absolute devotion to the crown, there were signs that other dangers were not forgotten in the excitement of the risings in Scotland and the west. Sir John Bramston noticed that many of the militia regiments, when called out against Monmouth, had refused to fight. "The true reason was, Monmouth had declared to maintain the Protestant religion, and that the king would set up popery, and this was the true cause the militia would not fight; not a love to Monmouth, but hatred to popery."¹ The rebellion had given James an excuse to increase the size of the regular army, and even Tories shook their heads. "We have now got a standing army," remarked Prideaux anxiously, "a thing the nation hath long been jealous of; but I hope the king will no otherwise use it than to secure our peace."²

Under pretext of a national emergency, James had secured an army,

1. The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, p. 185.

2. The Letters of Humphrey Prideaux, p.145.

but he had also admitted Catholics both as officers and men. When his action was questioned, he retorted by pointing to their proven loyalty, and refused to displace them. From the earliest days of his reign he had openly gone to mass;¹ certain of the staunchest loyalists might refuse to accompany him, but James steadily invested his attendance at mass with the pomp and circumstance of a state occasion. He received envoys of the Church of Rome, and welcomed the appointment of a nuncio. He let drop the first hints of his intention to demand of Anglican leaders a more conciliatory attitude toward the Catholic faith.

It is scarcely surprising that opposition rapidly began to crystallize. The growing horror of popery began to be articulate, and it was not among irresponsible zealots that concern was rising. Early in the reign, Halifax (still a minister on sufferance) had hinted to Reresby his fears that the king might try to impose popery on the country.² By the summer of 1685 he was writing to his brother that "I am of opinion that the next two or three months will be so very critical as to our affairs, that it will be seen within that compass of time, whether England can in any degree be a sanctuary for distressed Protestants."³ A few months later he described in yet more graphic language the mounting opposition to the king's policy. He himself had been dismissed because he refused to acquiesce in an attempt to overthrow the Test and Habeas Corpus Acts;

1. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p.332.

2. Reresby, Memoirs, p.322; Cf. Foxcroft, Life of Halifax, Vol. I, p. 439.

3. The Savile Correspondence, p. 281.

others, he pointed out to the Earl of Chesterfield, felt just as strongly as he did. "Your lordship would wonder what kind of men are resty in this case; men that wear red coats, that have leapt hedge and ditch in everything else, but swear they will never give up these bills....Lord Nottingham, Bishop of London, Lord Bridgewater, all the bishops, Lord Danby,...many of those who are called court lords, talk freely in this case."¹ Among members of the Commons, too, the opposition was rising.

When parliament met in November, the king's blunt demand for the retention of Catholic officers in the army aroused unmistakable signs of resentment.² In both houses the royal policy was attacked so openly that James could no longer entertain false hopes of what parliament would do, nor should he have ignored the signs of mounting opposition.³ The Bishop of London, when insisting on the Test Act as a necessary bulwark of the church, had claimed to speak for all the bishops, and his brethren had risen in a body to associate themselves with what he said. In anger, James prorogued parliament. It never sat again. He had good cause to be annoyed; by no constitutional means could he hope to get another parliament so submissive, but there was now no doubt as to its reaction to the first proof of the real nature of his designs.

The tide of popular alarm was rising fast. Sir John Reresby noted

1. Halifax to Chesterfield, Oct. 1685; Foxcroft, op.cit., Vol.I, p.455.

2. Reresby, op.cit., p. 344.

3. Ibid, pp.347-8.

that "the Popish party at this time behaved themselves with an insolence which did them a prejudice."¹ The king did nothing to dispel suspicion and much to increase it. He began at once his practice of expelling from office those who criticized his policy. "The Bishop of London, brother of the late Earl of Northampton, and of the Privy Council, a sober and learned prelate, was put out of the said Council for a speech he made in the Lord's House the last session concerning the popish officers; though I was told by the Archbishop of York that he spoke it with all the respect imaginable to the king."² James was busy appointing Catholics to positions of importance in Scotland and in Ireland, and the indignation aroused north of the Tweed³ was noted in England. The steady pressure in favour of Romanism increased. Popish books and pamphlets were freely printed and "sold and cried publicly." The story of the conversion of Charles II was given the widest circulation, and "some popish papers found in the late King's closet" were published. Even the reasons why the late Duchess of York was reconciled to Rome were printed. The Earl of Castlemaine was sent upon a solem embassy to Rome -- "and many other things, which made all men expect that more would follow of a greater concern."⁴

James never left his people long in suspense. He sent an order to

1. Reresby, op.cit., p.348.

2. Ibid, p. 351.

3. Note Reresby's comment: "This declared favour to persons of that religion gave great disgust in that kingdom." Cf. Bramston, Autobiography, p. 230.

4. Reresby, op.cit., p.359.

the Archbishop of Canterbury to direct the ministers in his diocese to preach a good life, but not to meddle with controversies in their sermons.¹ The king soon made it perfectly apparent that he intended to silence anti-Roman propaganda. The first step was a general warning; before long its meaning was emphasized by drastic action against some of the most prominent churchmen in the country. Even before he came to the throne, James had made an anti-Roman sermon the pretext for securing Burnet's ejection from the Rolls Chapel.² As king, he used every conceivable means to encourage Roman controversialists; all possible inducements -- even financial ones³ -- were held out to converts to Catholicism. To meet this attack, the Church of England relied largely on the effectiveness of preaching. In his autobiography, Simon Patrick gives an illuminating picture of the way the leading London ministers united to meet the challenge of Roman indoctrination.⁴ The influence of the pulpit was, indeed, of immense significance. The means of moulding public opinion were few in number; if it was desirable for James to silence the preachers, it was absolutely necessary for the Anglicans to maintain their freedom from control. But though the pulpit was almost the only place in which public concern could find expression, there other reasons -- even more fundamental in character --

1. The king's injunction bore the date March 25, 1686. Cf. White Kennett, History of England, Vol. III, p.454; D'Oyly, Life of Sancroft, p.131.

2. The Letters of Humphrey Prideaux, p. 142.

3. Cf. the quotation from D'Adda in Mackintosh, History of the Revolution, p.208.

4. Patrick, Autobiography, p. 105.

for alarm. The afternoon service was usually devoted to catechizing, and the struggle with the Puritans had resulted in establishing this practice as one of the marks of the Church of England.¹ As Halifax expressed it, the English "generally place their religion in the pulpit, as the papists do theirs upon the altar."² The result of the king's injunction was that "the Protestant clergy were forbidden by their enemy to maintain their religion by argument, when they justly regarded it as being in the greatest danger."³

Even more alarming was the king's determination to secure a bench of judges willing to give the kind of judicial rulings he needed in order to achieve his ends.⁴ Those who refused to conform to his wishes were ejected from their posts, but the protests of the displaced judges were noted by anxious supporters of the king. The chief justice, reports Reresby, told James "he was sorry his Majesty should expect such a construction of the law as he could not honestly give; and that none but indigent, ignorant, or ambitious people would give their judgments as he expected."⁵ It was no comfort to learn that James had replied that "it was necessary his judges should be of one mind." Even when the king had secured the judgment he wanted -- a ruling that by virtue of his prerogative he could dispense with the operation of

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1. This fact is strongly emphasized in Overton, Life in the Church of England.
 2. Foxcroft, op.cit., Vol. I, p.467.
 3. Mackintosh, op.cit., p.67.
 4. Bramston, op.cit., p.232; Reresby, op.cit., 361.
 5. Reresby, op.cit., p.361.

the law¹ -- the attorney general (Sir Robert Sawyer) refused to draw a warrant whereby a Roman priest could by the king's prerogative be put into a benefice, and added that "he durst not do it, and desired the king would consider of it, since this struck at the root of the Protestant church, which was contrary to his Majesty's late gracious promise."²

It was useless to recall the king's promises to uphold the established church. He had already given clear warning that his support was conditioned by complete acquiescence in his plans. On the strength of the judges' ruling regarding the prerogative, James had begun to fill the Council with Catholic peers. The appointment of Catholics to positions within the Church of England went forward; Walker, now an avowed Romanist, was confirmed as master of University College, Oxford, and Massey, also a papist, was appointed dean of Christ Church.³ Assurances were given to all converts to the true faith that they would not lose any positions they already held.⁴ The Ecclesiastical Commission was revived -- though laws still on the statute book made it clearly an illegal body -- and its first major act was to suspend the Bishop of London. Compton had not taken sufficiently drastic action against Sharpe (dean of Norwich and rector of St. Giles

1. Bramston, op.cit., p.232.

2. Reresby, op.cit., p.361.

3. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 391.

4. Note the interest aroused by the case of the rector of Putney.

Cripplegate) for an anti-Roman sermon, and the case aroused the keenest interest. Bramston, with the vividness of an eye witness, describes the crowds that gathered outside the room where the commission met to deal with Compton,¹ and the bishop's resolute defence of the strict legality of his actions gained him the support of an immense body of public opinion, even if it failed to avert his suspension.²

The king was rapidly antagonizing all his natural supporters. He had already outraged every Anglican sentiment, and he had gradually forced almost all his Tory followers into opposition. But it was not enough to have endangered the liberties of the church, attacked its liturgy, threatened its position, and struck down its boldest leaders. James proceeded to multiply the outward signs of Roman Catholic ascendancy. Contemporary records are full of references to the constant opening of new centres for Roman worship.³ The king forbade any signs of rejoicing on the popular festivals of Protestantism, and he sharply reprimanded magistrates who failed to prevent bonfires on Gunpowder Day.⁴ Even the most discreditable episodes acquired a religious significance; when James reverted to a former mistress, the Catholics and Protestants immediately took sides.⁵ This unpleasant incident had the effect,

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1. Bramston, op.cit., p.239f. The ecclesiastical commissioners had to station two musketeers outside the door to hold back the crowds.
 2. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p.385. Cf. Foxcroft, op.cit., Vol. I, p.472 for Halifax's opinion of Compton's heightened prestige.
 3. Bramston, op.cit., pp.225, 253; Luttrell, Vol. I, pp.371,373, 375; The Hatton Correspondence, Vol. II, p. 99.
 4. Luttrell, op.cit., Vol. I, p.388.
 5. Reresby, op.cit., p.356; Mackintosh, op.cit., p.54.

however, of hastening the final downfall of the Hydes. Sunderland, supported by Father Petre and encouraged by the Queen, had been insisting that with Protestants still in positions of influence at court, it was impossible to look for conversions to Rome. "Till the Lord Treasurer (Rochester) changed his mind or was removed, it was hopeless to expect people to realize that there was no means of preserving power or credit but by supporting the king's measures for the Catholic religion."¹ At the end of 1686, James informed D'Adda that Rochester's obstinate perseverance in error made it necessary for him to go. The nuncio noted, however, that the decision had increased public excitement. It was the cry of the people, he said, that if Rochester was dismissed because he would not become a Catholic, there must be a design on foot to expel all Protestants from office.²

Early in 1687 the king's breach with the Protestant Tories was complete. This meant that his attempt to secure concessions for Catholics through the cooperation of the Church of England had failed. With the publication of the Declaration of Indulgence, James adopted a new policy. With the help of Catholics, Dissenters, and apostate Tories, he would create a new political bloc.³ Reresby at once noted that the king hoped to divide the Protestants while at the same time encouraging the Catholics.⁴

1. Barillon's report to Louis XIV, 13/23 Sept., 1686. Fox MSS, I, 150.

2. D'Adda, 31 Dec., 1686/10 Jan., 1687.

3. Note D'Adda's report of Sunderland's explanation of the new policy: "AS we have wounded the Anglican party, we must destroy it, and use every means to strengthen as well as conciliate the other.."

4. Reresby, op.cit., p.372.

But even the Catholics were no longer agreed among themselves. many of them wished only for such concessions as could have been readily secured. They believed that to ask for more would be to endanger what they could otherwise easily secure. Probably most of the English Catholics were agreed on this point, and they watched with dismay the mounting prejudice aroused by the king's policy. The result was division and uncertainty, and the fear of facing popular indignation made Catholic congregations "very small and liker a conventicle than a church triumphant."¹ Even within the court circle, some favoured more moderate courses. D'Adda, as we have seen, realized that the king had not carried the people with him; while professing unbounded admiration of James' pious zeal, he was shocked at the rash measures of the king and the Catholic zealots. But James, secure in his sense of power, and fortified by assurances of French help, felt he could disregard popular feeling. Louis XIV, said James to Barillon, will find "that I omit to do nothing that is in my power. I hope that the king, your master, will help me, and that together we shall do great things for religion."² Sunderland assured the nuncio that James had declared himself irrevocably committed to his "holy designs," "the advancement of the Catholic religion." The French ambassador, however, pointed out to Louis that "every Englishman who becomes rich is more disposed to favour the popular party than the designs of the king." But the Jesuit faction was pushing the king forward so

1. The Savile Correspondence, p. 290.

2. Barillon, 2/12 May, 1687. Fox MSS, I, 183.

recklessly that even Sunderland hinted to D'Adda that "it was better to go on step by step than obstinately to aim at all with the risk of gaining nothing." In due course, all sober Catholics realized with alarm that James was outstripping all the bounds of common prudence. It might be gratifying to receive papal representatives in great state, and to see the capital thronged with Catholic clergy in their habits might suggest the progress of his scheme, but even Louis sent angry protests. To receive the envoy of the elector of Cologne in his ecclesiastical robes, he said, was an act unparalleled even in Catholic countries, and was certain to provoke heretics, whose prejudices ought not to be wantonly irritated.¹ Gourville, when asked by the Duchess of Tyrconnell for a judgment of the "holy enterprise" -- to be transmitted to King James -- replied with even greater vehemence. "If I were pope," he said, "I should have excommunicated him for exposing all the English Catholics to the risk of being hanged...In my opinion, he ought to be content with favouring the Catholics on every occasion, and he should leave to his successors the care of gradually subjecting England altogether to the authority of the pope."²

James was not content to wait, nor even to go forward cautiously. The purge of Protestant officials continued.³ James began his "closetings" -- interviews in which he pressed those in any position of

1. Louis XIV to Barillon, quoted in Mackintosh, op.cit., p.207.

2. Mémoires de Gourville, tom. ii, p.254.

3. Cf. Reresby, op.cit., pp.370-2; Bramston, op.cit., pp. 267, 301.

influence to commit themselves to his designs. In anticipation of a new parliament, he did his best to persuade possible members to "preengage" to support the repeal of the Test Act. Even those whom tradition should have made his staunchest supporters refused with disconcerting unanimity. All the while, Catholics were replacing Protestants (often the most fervid of loyal Tories) in offices ranging from lord lieutenancies to receiverships of customs.

James should have realized what had already happened, but Reresby believed that addresses of thanks inspired by the Indulgence warped his judgment.¹ He did not stop to ask whether they really reflected the opinion even of the groups for which they professed to speak. Many an expression of gratitude was wrung from an unwilling body by an adroit supporter of the court, and even in assessing nonconformist feeling, James did not consider the relative influence of those who did and those who would not send him an address of thanks.

Sunderland had told the nuncio that it was necessary for the king to achieve his purpose without letting the army realize how completely he depended on its support.² Regiment after regiment had been taken from Tory officers and entrusted to Roman Catholics. With incredible folly, James proposed, at the end of 1687, to pledge even the common soldiers to support the repeal of the tests. A declaration was prepared, to be tendered first to regiments which were expected to set a good

1. Reresby, op.cit., p.393.

2. D'Adda, 28 July/7 August, 1687.

example to the rest of the army. All those hesitating to comply with the king's commands were to lay down their arms. In Lord Lichfield's regiment, where the experiment was tried, all except two captains and a few Roman Catholic soldiers laid down their arms. After a moment's painful silence, the king ordered them to take up their muskets, "saying that he should not again do them the honour to consult them."¹ No better example could be found of the blundering ineptitude of the king's policy. The consummate folly and vacillation of his method -- firm without being effective, relenting without being conciliatory -- is here seen at its very worst.

So ignominious a rebuff would have taught a wiser man to avoid further humiliation, but both the virtues and the vices of the king combined to push him on to disaster. He was prepared to ignore the protests of public opinion on the ground that the views of important individuals were ultimately far more influential than the attitude of the masses. Now, in rapid succession, he made three blunders which convinced all the important people in the country that the king could no longer be supported. The Charterhouse incident by itself might not have done irrevocable harm. In conjunction with his treatment of the fellows of Magdalen and of the seven bishops it was fatal. It is not necessary to describe in detail either of the last two episodes, because full accounts are given in all contemporary memoirs,² and the story has often been retold, but it is important to note the reasons why both

1. Kennett, History of England, Vol. III, p.516.

2. Cf. re the Magdalen College affair, Bramston, Luttrell, Reresby, the Hatton Correspondence, &c.

are of such importance in the development of anti-Roman feeling.

The king's attack on the fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford, did not represent a new departure in royal policy. It was merely the most striking of the king's invasions of the rights of great church bodies. Catholics had already been intruded into the headships of two famous Oxford colleges; there was every reason to believe that James had taken the first steps toward securing the same results at Cambridge. Feelings had already been aroused; the resistance of the fellows of Magdalen showed for the first time how deep and general was the concern. Moreover, the attempt to impose a Roman Catholic president on Magdalen was an attack on one of the largest and richest educational bodies in the kingdom, and the close connection between the universities and the church made every development at Oxford or Cambridge a matter of immediate interest to every rector in the country, however remote his parish might be. Consequently the passions aroused in Oxford spread to every corner of the land. The king had expelled men of learning from positions which were regarded as their private property, and he had done it without any process of trial that would be countenanced by the laws of the kingdom. Arbitrary and illegal proceedings -- especially when property rights were at stake -- aroused public anger at once. The revenues of the college were transferred to adherents of the king's religion -- to men, that is, who were legally incapable of holding them. The striking unanimity of the members of the university was due to the fact that in academic corporations, the wrongs of every member are felt

as a threat to the entire body. Moreover the defence of a corporate right has the advantage of appearing more generous than a contest for private interests, and corporate spirit is one of the most steady and inflexible principles of human action.

The king was both surprised and infuriated at the resistance he encountered. He should have been prepared, but he had the true pedant's preference for theoretical rather than practical considerations. It had suited him to be misled by warm protestations of absolute loyalty. The measures he had taken against civil liberties had awakened no comparable outburst of indignation, and James believed that there could be no effective protests because they would be smothered in advance by the doctrine of passive obedience. If forcible resistance to oppression was impossible, then the leaders of the Church of England would necessarily watch with patient resignation as the bulwarks of their wealth and power were destroyed.

The Magdalen College case had shown clearly the character of James' Anglican supporters. Bishop Cartwright of Chester, always ambitious, usually brusque and overbearing, sometimes timid and afraid, was universally detested as a buffoon and a place hunter.¹ Jeffreys was, as usual, coarse and brutal. The character of the king's Anglican opponents became clearer when the seven bishops were brought to trial. James still professed indignant

1. It was common belief that he was using every possible means to secure his appointment to the vacant see of York. Even in days when absolute obedience was widely professed, it was a shock to hear a bishop tell college fellows that "they must sacrifice their consciences as a peace-offering to the father of their country." Letter from Thomas Tremallier of Jesus College, Oxford, to Lord Hatton, The Hatton Correspondence, Vol. II, p.78.

surprise at Anglican opposition, and the bishops' protestations ought to have shown him to what lengths he was goading men who wanted to be loyal. The distinction, drawn by the bishops themselves and emphasized by their counsel, between the wrong that the king cannot do and the wrong to which his advisers may persuade him, showed the direction in which even the loyalest subjects were moving. From the king's point of view, the most serious feature of the trial was its disclosure of the uniform support given to his opponents by all classes of the community. Great peers were anxious to stand as surety for the bishops, though in so doing they openly arrayed themselves against the king; nonconformists came to the Tower to pay their respects, and thereby brought upon themselves at once a royal rebuke. The crowds kneeled to receive Sancroft's blessing, and even the soldiers openly showed that their sympathies were with the bishops. Seldom has a king isolated himself so completely from his people; perhaps never has a king invited so stinging a public rebuke. As the papal nuncio watched the rejoicings which greeted the acquittal of the bishops, he sadly read in them the lesson of the English people's hatred of his faith -- and of the king's designs to favour it. "The fires over the whole city, the drinking in every street, accompanied by cries to the health of the bishops and confusion to the Catholics, with the play of fireworks and the discharge of fire arms, and other demonstrations of furious gladness mixed with impious outrage against religion, which were continued during formed a scene of unspeakable horror, displaying in all its rancour the malignity of this heretical people against the Church."¹

1. D'Adda, 6/16 July, 1688. Quoted in Mackintosh, op.cit., p.276.

James had brought to a pitch of unparalleled intensity the hatred of Rome which had been steadily increasing for a generation. With a crowing act of folly he had so contrived affairs that a dramatic outburst of anti-Catholic feeling had become a national repudiation of royal policy. D'Adda might draw the proper inference from the spectacle of popular rejoicing; he did not see the more secret but much more serious steps which had already been taken to end what James had begun. The train of events leading to the landing of William of Orange are not our concern, but it is necessary to notice the mounting signs of popular feeling against Rome. When concessions no longer had any value, James began to retract. The actions of the King had alienated all who might have rallied to his support, and those who still clung desperately to their loyalty were confused and bewildered. "Good my lord," wrote Sir Charles Lyttleton to Hatton, "give me free advice in this matter, and tell me how you resolve this matter."¹ "Tis a very hard and pitiable condition that men of quality are now in," exclaimed William Longueville.² The closing months of 1688 are a record of increasing indecision on the part of the king and his followers. Tardy and ineffectual concessions -- dismissal of Roman Catholics from offices they were not entitled to hold, restoration of corporate rights illegally invaded, decisions to call the representatives of the people -- merely reflected the astonishing collapse of a confidence which had lately overruled all religious and constitutional rights and had consistently ignored all warnings of danger. Many an Anglican

1. The Hatton Correspondence, Vol. II, p.99.

2. Ibid, p. 120.

who could not support the king in his recent policies still felt that the basic tenets of the Anglican Church made it impossible openly to resist him.¹

Amid the growing public unrest and apprehension,² most Anglicans had already resolved their scruples regarding passive obedience, and it was soon apparent that all support of James was rapidly disintegrating. Pepys, writing from the Admiralty to Lord Dartmouth (Admiral of the Fleet), clearly reveals the confusion which crippled the king's plans at a crucial moment. Watermen and victuallers could not be stirred to action; even the captains could with difficulty be kept aboard their ships.³ The voluminous correspondence of that indefatigable civil servant proves conclusively the extent to which the king's earlier actions were now serving to defeat his cause. James, by his impetuosity in attempting to improve the position of the Catholics had convinced everyone that he intended to re-establish his own form of the Christian faith in England. The future of Protestantism was consequently in serious jeopardy, and the enemies of King James appealed incessantly to the religious fears of Englishmen. "My lord," wrote William of Orange to Dartmouth when urging the admiral to amalgamate the Dutch and English fleets, "the

1. Cf. Charles Hatton to his brother (Nov. 20, 1688): "...knowing how firmly I have imbibed the principles of the Church of England, you will be secure I cannot depart from my allegiance to my prince." The Hatton Correspondence, Vol. II, p.109.

2. Note the illuminating letter of the Earl of Bath to Lord Dartmouth (Oct.3,1688), MSS of the Earl of Dartmouth, Hist.MSS. Comm., Report XI, Appendix V, p.139.

3. Ibid, p. 146ff.

4. The Prince of Orange to Lord Dartmouth, Nov. 29, 1688. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report XI, App.V, p.219.

Protestant religion and the liberties of England being now at stake, I cannot believe that you will contribute toward the destruction of either."¹ The common people might not fully understand an appeal to safeguard English liberties, but they were quick to interpret in their own way the call to maintain the Protestant religion. As soon as the success of William's landing seemed assured, anti-Roman riots began to break out. The ostentatious way in which Catholic concessions had been paraded before the public eye now brought its own retribution. Priests appearing in their habits were severely mauled, and the mobs sacked one by one the chapels that had been set aside for the celebration of the mass.² As violence mounted, prominent Catholics began to flee from London. "The Roman Catholics of quality," remarked Pepys, "daily betake themselves to flight, my Lord Peterborow being said to have withdrawn yesterday, and my Lord Salisbury last night late in the night, having with difficulty escaped, after having been stopped in the city, by getting himself out of his coach, and riding away upon one of his servant's horses."³ The indecision which had paralyzed royal policy throughout the crucial days of the autumn of 1688 gave William an opportunity to consolidate his support. The trickle of desertions from the royal camp became a torrent in full flood, and it was after Seymour had thrown in his lot with William that the famous Association made clear

1. The Prince of Orange to Lord Dartmouth, Nov.29,1688, Hist. MSS Comm., Report XI, App. V, p.219.

2. Cf. William Longueville to Lord Hatton, Nov.13,1688: "The moblie has been very turbulent hereabouts, and after sundry appearances against the popish chapels of Bridge Row and Lime Street, they have been last Sunday furiously bent for the destroying that in the late house of Earl Berkeley." The Hatton Correspondence, Vol. II, p.99.

3. Hist. MSS Comm., Report XI, App. V, p.228.

the character of the opposition which King James had raised against himself. The Association pledged all whom it united "to stick firm to this cause and to one another, until our religion, laws, and liberties are so far secured to us in a free Parliament, that we shall be no more in danger of falling under Popery and slavery."¹

All attempts to redeem the situation on behalf of James were doomed to failure, and those who watched his fall had no doubt that the rock on which his cause had split was the stubborn English antipathy to Rome. The reign of James was short, remarked Bramston with a touch of Tory regret, "yet was his design very apparent,-- the Roman religion he resolved to establish, maugre all the laws, and what averseness soever in the nobility, gentry, and the common people also."² Every thing James did had reference to his all-absorbing purpose, "but this furious hasty driving ruined him, and all his."³

James had precipitated the Revolution by his rash attempts to restore Catholicism, and it was certain that the Revolution settlement would do nothing to improve the lot of English Catholics. Actually, the existing laws were so stringent that very little could be done to penalize them further for the follies of the late king. Two or three acts of parliament reflect the religious crisis which precipitated the Revolution, but they did not seriously alter the status of the Catholics.

1. Cf. Ranke, *op.cit.*, Vol. IV, p.444; Foxcroft, Life of Halifax, Vol. II, p.26.

2. Bramston, *op.cit.*, p. 343.

3. *Ibid.*

The Declaration of Rights had stated that the safety and welfare of a Protestant kingdom could not be reconciled with the rule of a Catholic king -- or even with that of a sovereign married to a popish consort -- and the Bill of Rights invested the conviction with the authority of law. Catholics, moreover, were not to possess arms, and were to be excluded from London and Westminster. Otherwise the heavy structure of anti-Roman legislation remained unchanged. At the same time, we are assured by the Spanish ambassador that the Revolution actually improved the position of English Catholics. The provocations of the late reign were removed; the public mind was no longer obsessed with fears of popery, and gradually the Catholics slipped back into the relative quiet from which James had dragged them. Their real position was always gauged, not in terms of the provisions of the law but in proportion to the severity with which they were enforced. Oppressive measures are produced in times of panic, and are rigorously invoked only when fear revives. As regards the Roman Catholics, the serious result of the Revolution was not the aggravation of their lot; it was rather the hardening in the English mind of a conviction that politically Catholics could not be trusted, and so should not be given rights which might make them dangerous to the state. The laws against them were seldom enforced in their full severity, but for over a hundred years the legacy of James II blocked any attempt to restore to Catholics their full civil status. Their most ardent champion had proved to be their greatest foe.

CHAPTER XIII . CONCLUSION.

Century by century the complexion of religious thought changes, and every period has its distinctive quality. But the transition from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth represents a modification more complete and more important than the differences of emphasis which normally distinguish one period from the next. In the forty years which followed the Restoration, a change took place of quite unusual significance. The men who represented Anglicanism when Charles II came back to his throne had clear affinities with the past. Thorndike and Hammond had been trained in the school of Hooker and Andrewes, but Hooker, as Dr. Tillyard has shown,¹ reflects the outlook of the Elizabethan age. His view of the world traced its origin back beyond the Renaissance, through the Middle Ages to thought forms yet more ancient. But at the end of the century, the men whose works were moulding religious thought were indebted to Newton for their understanding of the world and to Locke for their interpretation of man's relation to it. Their outlook was, in embryo at least, the outlook of the modern age. These forty years have usually been neglected; the religious leaders were for the most part mediocre men, and great

1. E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1943), p.10.

~~great~~ writers few and far between, but the works of men of second-rate ability mark a change of first-rate importance.

As the character of religious thought altered, the ascendancy of reason became steadily more pronounced. This was the most striking single feature of the period from 1660 to 1700, and this essay has referred to it again and again. The importance of reason was not a new discovery of the Restoration age. In Anglican theology there was a strain of very ancient lineage which emphasized the rôle of the intellect in religion, and in the earlier part of the seventeenth century men like Chillingworth and Hales had protested in the name of reason against both dogmatism and irrationality. But the great religious struggle of the century had been fought in a spirit very different from that of the circle at Great Tew. The Puritans had magnified certain exceedingly important elements in Christian thought and experience, but their theology increasingly sacrificed the qualities of balance and proportion, and invited a reaction all the more severe because political power was also at stake. Certain excesses of the sects inspired a deep-seated dread of fanaticism in all its forms. The overthrow of the Puritans meant the repudiation of many of their most characteristic attitudes, and the reaction found its clearest expression in the exaltation of reason. This seemed the surest safeguard against "enthusiasm", and men of widely varying points of view united to affirm the rights and prerogatives of the intellect.

In time this unanimity gave way to uniformity. The Cambridge Platonists had been as ready to dwell on the need of reason as were the later Latitudinarians, but their characteristic qualifications gradually slipped into obscurity and were forgotten. As a result, the emphasis on reason acquired a new quality as well as a new predominance. It was defined in a new way, but it was also approached in a new spirit. The claims of reason more and more approximated to the standards of common sense. What it gained in scope it lost in depth and comprehensiveness. Chillingworth and Whichcote and Toland all agreed that reason is important, but the differences in tone are profound. The change in the character of religious thought in the later seventeenth century resulted in the arid intellectualism of the succeeding age. The Restoration period saw the steady acceptance of the claims of reason; of greater importance is the fact that reason proved to be a circumscribing as well as a liberating force.

As the period wore on, the whole approach to religious knowledge gradually altered. The Puritans had not ignored the part the imagination plays, but there was a wide-spread belief that they had abused it. "Enthusiasm" was the arch sin of "fanatics", and the imagination was branded as an irrational force. Intuition also was ignored. Locke excluded it from the earlier sections of his Essay; then, in defiance¹ of consistency, he returned to it in Book IV of his most famous work.

1. N. Kemp Smith, op.cit., p.27f.

The results are seen in the subsequent course of philosophy, but the ordinary person was satisfied with the attitude which Locke had originally adopted. The witness of religious experience was less and less understood, and consequently more and more ignored. The outcome is most clearly seen in the limited and unimaginative outlook of William Paley.

A period marked by the steadily increasing prestige of reason was not disposed to view with any favour the claims of authority. It listened with suspicion to the voice of tradition and the claims of dogmatic systems. This was natural; in the theological warfare of recent years, the appeal to authority had been a common weapon, but it had often been unscrupulously used. The striking lack of historical insight which marked the close of the seventeenth century made it all the harder to deal justly with the past. Moreover, the confident faith in reason made the testimony of any previous period seem comparatively unimportant. The protest against any disposition to impose by fiat a system of belief was necessary and salutary, but the age of Locke and Toland did not see that new forms of authority were creeping in to displace the old. The authority of common sense, in particular, threatened to become a tyranny scarcely less exacting than the methods previously used to secure conformity. There gradually emerged what can only be described as the cult of plausibility. The end of the seventeenth century invested with a new authority whatever was simple, reasonable,

well-balanced and well-bred.

The pre-eminent position of the Bible remained apparently unchallenged. Actually the corrosives of the new outlook affected it in less obvious but almost equally important ways. At the end of the period, men spoke of its authority with a reverence seemingly as great as that of the Puritans themselves, but the reader is left with an uncomfortable suspicion that they protested too much. An earlier age had believed without question that the Scriptures were a final and absolute standard of truth. All other issues were tested by reference to that sovereign norm. At the end of the seventeenth century, most writers make the same profession, but they vindicate the Scriptures by referring them to another standard -- that of reason. "Reason," said Locke, "must be our last judge and guide in everything."¹ He and his contemporaries agreed that the Scriptures accorded with the canons of sound reason; the fact remains that the Bible was no longer the final and absolute standard. However it might stand the test, it had been brought to the bar of another court. With regard to miracles, also, the same process was at work. They were still cited as conclusive proofs of the truth of the Christian revelation, but they were first shown to be part of a comprehensively reasonable interpretation of the world.

Miracles were discussed with reference to the reign of law, and this points to a change which, more than any other, marks this period

1. Locke, Essay, IV, 19, 14.

as decisively important in the history of modern thought. Intelligent and progressive men could not ignore the findings of the new science. The Newtonian view of the world increasingly gained ground. Englishmen noted with delight that a fellow-countryman had unfolded for them the mysteries of the universe, and in Addison we clearly see the complacent satisfaction with which educated Englishmen were adjusting their thinking to the newly discovered facts. As Professor Raven has pointed out, the seventeenth century held out high hopes that the insights of science and religion would be brought to fruitful reconciliation.¹ The promise was not fulfilled. The succeeding generation was unequal to the task of integrating the new and the old. Our period ends with the curious spectacle of men who accepted with no sense of incongruity the ancient stories of Genesis and the recent discoveries of Newton.

The earlier part of the seventeenth century had been an age of bitter struggle, and the Restoration period valued stability above most other things. Security could best be secured by repressing those who might disturb it, and consequently the nonconformists were persecuted. In the years immediately following 1660, there were few in positions of authority who would have countenanced the view that minorities should not be suppressed. Whether the issue was seen from the political or the religious side, there was virtually complete agreement that toleration was both inexpedient and wrong. By 1688, the discipline

1. C. E . Raven, Science, Religion and the Future, p.28-9.

of events had for the first time convinced those who might have withheld toleration that they ought to grant it. This momentous change was possible because the lessons of experience reinforced a theory which was rapidly gaining acceptance. As a result, toleration was established within the bounds which political security allowed. Atheists and Roman Catholics were still barred from its full benefits, but only because in both cases their views were regarded as potentially disruptive of the stability of the state. Locke's first Letter on Toleration was the cogent summary of the case against religious persecution, and it remained the classic justification of the Revolution Settlement. But it is worth noting that the terms in which toleration was defended further illustrate the changes which had taken place in English religious thought. The repression of minorities had become indefensible because the majority had lost much of the confidence which persecution presupposes. Part of Locke's contribution to the thought of his age was a new recognition of the limitations to which our knowledge is subject. It was now possible to grant toleration, not so much because you had gained a new respect for the integrity and sincerity of others, as because any vehement certainties were thoroughly suspect.

The closing years of the seventeenth century had no place for arrogance or dogmatism, but they opened an era uniquely confident and self-assured. Enthusiasm was suppressed and passion carefully controlled, but this made it all the easier to believe in the neatly-ordered regularity of life. Man was a noble creature (though never in an

extravagant way); the universe was marvellously contrived (though not as yet so vast as to dwarf man by its immensity); the political order was securely established, and liberty (reasonably limited) was a part of the firm structure of society. God, the ultimate ground of this stability, remained discreetly in the background as a kind of honorary president of the universe that He had made. Religious thought had issued in a mood of dangerously complacent satisfaction, and Addison, the spokesman of the coming age, could invite his readers "to consider the world in its most agreeable lights."

B I B L I O G R A P H Y .

(Note -- A bibliography of this kind is necessarily selective. The nature of seventeenth century religious literature -- much of it in pamphlet form, but with very lengthy titles -- would otherwise expand the bibliography to intolerable dimensions).

Abbreviations:

- Cal. St. P. Dom. -- Calendar of State Papers, Domestic.¹
Hist. MSS. Comm. -- Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission.
E. R. E. -- Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
L. J. -- Journals of the House of Lords.
C. J. -- Journals of the House of Commons.
D. N. B. -- Dictionary of National Biography.

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