CHAPTER II

The Religious Upheaval

THE immediate origins of the Protestant Reformation lay in the religious experience of Martin Luther (1483–1546). We will never know precisely what happened to Luther in the years between his becoming a monk in 1505 and his dramatic attack on indulgences in 1517. But we know from his contemporary lecture notes and from his later writings and conversations with friends that he underwent years of harrowing emotional and intellectual tension which finally resulted in a "conversion" experience sometime during these years. The nature of this experience was to determine the main features of Protestant belief and the direction which the Protestant movement took. It is important, therefore—difficult as it is—to sketch briefly the inner struggles of this obscure Augustinian friar and their outcome.

Salvation by Faith

Outwardly, young Martin Luther was one of the most pious and diligent monks in the friary at Erfurt. "If ever a monk got to heaven by his monikery," he wrote twenty years later, "I should certainly have got there." But he was haunted from the beginning by doubts about whether he, a mere man and a sinner, could ever satisfy a righteous God.
In spite of fastings, scourgings, and prayer beyond the rule, he could gain no sense of being forgiven. Doubt aroused fear, and fear led to moments of panic and despair. Staupitz, the kindly vicar of the order, could not understand this sensitive and intelligent younger brother who was constantly confessing his minor sins and yet could never quite rid himself of the sense of guilt.

Scholars differ in explaining Luther’s predicament. Perhaps his conception of God as a stern and righteous Judge owed something to the character of his father, a hard-working peasant and miner, devoted to his son’s welfare but strict and demanding. Perhaps it owed something to stern representations of God in either sculpture or story impressed upon him at an early age. He had taken the vow to become a monk in a moment of panic during a thunder-storm, and the fact that he immediately regretted it but went through with it may have contributed to his later tension. Luther was a high-strung person with keen sensibilities and a sensitive conscience, not the kind to persuade himself easily that he was doing the best he could and that the rest might be left to God (as his spiritual advisers urged). The theological school which dominated the teaching at the University of Erfurt where he had studied put strong emphasis on what were called “good works,” a term which included sacramental and ceremonial acts (such as doing penance, fasting, going on a pilgrimage, entering a monastery) as well as acts of charity. The kernel of this teaching was that man through his own effort and will has a large share in determining his ultimate salvation or damnation. In effect, Luther was acting on this teaching, but failing miserably to gain any inner assurance of forgiveness and so of the promise of salvation.
Then something happened. In 1511 Staupitz had seen that Luther was appointed Professor of Bible at the new University of Wittenberg, and for a year or more the thirty-year-old professor had been soaking himself in Scripture. The influence of his friends and his reading began to suggest a solution to his soul's plight. As he remembered it later, it all happened suddenly (some scholars think in the winter of 1512–1513) in the tower room of the Augustinian friary at Wittenberg where he lived, perhaps while he was writing notes for his lectures on the Psalms (which scholars rediscovered only a half-century ago). Here is his own account, written in 1545, of his attempt to probe St. Paul's meaning in Romans 1:17:

After I had pondered the problem for days and nights, God took pity on me and I saw the inner connection between the two phrases, "The justice of God is revealed in the Gospel" and "The just shall live by faith." I began to understand that this "justice of God" is the righteousness by which the just man lives through the free gift of God, that is to say "by faith." . . . Thereupon I felt as if I had been born again and had entered Paradise through wide-open gates. Immediately the whole of Scripture took on a new meaning for me. I raced through the Scriptures, so far as my memory went, and found analogies in other expressions.¹

Luther felt he had rediscovered the meaning of St. Paul's conviction that a Christian is saved not by moral or ceremonial "works," but by his faith in the loving and merciful Father who incarnated Himself in Jesus Christ in order to

lished and devoured by Germans everywhere. The pent-up resentment against papal exactions and ecclesiastical abuses became polarized by his attack. The sale of indulgences fell off sharply, and the Dominicans demanded that Luther be curbed. Step by step, opponents who saw the doctrinal and financial dangers in Luther's criticisms forced him to work out the implications of his position. First he appealed to the pope, but the Medici Leo X was inclined to treat the whole matter as an unimportant quarrel between monks. When Leo's attitude became harder, he appealed from the pope to a general council. Finally a particularly skillful debater, Dr. John Eck, manoeuvred him into declaring that even a general council was fallible—which left him with Scripture and conscience as his only ultimate authorities. This became perfectly clear when he faced the emperor Charles V and the assembled Diet of the empire at Worms in 1521 and replied to the demand that he recant his views with words which were to become famous throughout Europe:

Unless I am convinced by the evidence of Scripture or by plain reason—for I do not accept the authority of the Pope or the councils alone, since it is established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves—I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. God help me. Amen.

Protestant Beliefs

Between 1520, when Luther wrote the tracts and pamphlets which are still the best expression of his religious ideas, and 1530, when the beliefs of the church he founded were summarized in the Augsburg Confession, the main lines of Protestant belief and practice were worked out by Luther
himself and his lieutenants in Wittenberg, with some contributions from independent leaders of revolt against Rome such as Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich and Martin Bucer in Strasbourg.

The best general description of Protestantism is still probably that of Ernst Troeltsch: "A modification of Catholicism, in which the Catholic formulation of problems was retained, while a different answer was given to them." In particular, Luther offered relatively new answers to four questions which go far back in Christian history. To the question how is a man to be saved, Luther answered: not by works but by faith. To the question where does religious authority lie, he answered: not in the visible institution known as the Roman Church, but in the "Word of God" contained in the Bible. To the question what is the church, he answered: the whole community of Christian believers, since all are really priests and since every man must be "a Christ to his neighbor." To the question what is the essence of Christian living, he replied: serving God in one's calling, whether secular or ecclesiastical, since all useful callings are equally sacred in the eyes of God. These were the four central Protestant beliefs, each closely related to the others: salvation by faith rather than by works, the authority of the Bible interpreted by the consecrated conscience, the priest-

2 "Protestant" was a kind of nickname given to a group of Lutheran princes who presented a "protest" against repressive measures at an Imperial Diet in 1529. The name stuck and is generally applied today to all non-Catholic, non-Orthodox Christians, although it should perhaps be limited historically to the six major families of Protestant denominations: Lutheran, Anglican, Calvinist (Reformed or Presbyterian), Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist. This would exclude Unitarian groups. But it is impossible to be absolutely precise in use of the term. The quotation that follows is from Protestantism and Progress (New York, 1912), p. 59.
hood of all believers, and the service of God in secular as well as clerical callings. All could be taken to follow from Luther's original experience of God's saving grace in the gift of faith.

To sixteenth-century followers of Luther, Protestantism was essentially a restoration. During the Middle Ages—so the theory ran—Christianity had become encrusted and overloaded with doctrines and practices which had nothing to do with its essence and which came close to obliterating the Gospel revealed to the early church. It was imperative to go back to Paul and the Gospels, back to the practices and insights of the Apostolic Age, in order to recapture Christian truth. The canon law and scholastic theology of recent centuries were satanic corruptions of the primitive Gospel. The bishop of Rome, far from representing Christ on earth, was the Anti-Christ prophesied in the Book of Revelation.

To sixteenth-century Catholics, Protestantism was essentially a revolution. To deny that Christ had founded his church on Peter and that the popes were Peter's successors, to question the divine institution of the seven sacraments, to say that all believers are equally priests, that all men are saved or damned by the arbitrary will of God with no respect to good works or merit—all this was either heresy or blasphemy to loyal sons of the mediaeval church. Luther, not Leo, was the Anti-Christ—the "wild boar" which was ravaging God's vineyards, in the words of the papal bull which excommunicated the heretic friar in 1520.

Today most historians refer to Protestantism as a reformation. In the ordinary sense of moral reform, Protestantism probably accomplished little. Nor did Luther think of his movement as aimed primarily at the improvement of clerical and lay morality. Protestantism is properly described, how-
ever, as a reforming or reformulating of the Christian tradition. In attempting to restore first-century Christianity, the early Protestants were inevitably revolutionists. In going back, they moved forward. And the result was that they gave a new shape to the Christian tradition in almost half of Europe.

The Appeal of Protestantism

One of the most difficult tasks of the historian is to discover how and why a complex set of ideas like those of Luther captures men's minds and so becomes a historical "movement." The simplest explanation is to say that Luther was a "typical" German of his day, with an uncanny feeling for the religious problems of ordinary people, and that his teachings went straight to the hearts of those who were tired as he was of trying to win salvation by good works. There is truth in this, but as an explanation it obviously applies only to a tiny minority of persons who had a religious sensibility and sophistication comparable to Luther's. What of the many others all over Europe—peasants, artisans, merchants, lawyers, priests, monks, and princes—who we know became "Lutherans"?

Among the lowest classes there were many who misinterpreted Luther to mean that God meant men to be free of all bonds, social and economic as well as ecclesiastical. They were soon disillusioned when Luther made it clear that what he meant by "the liberty of a Christian" was freedom from the galling restrictions of the Roman Church, not freedom from servitude or from obedience to secular rulers. But they were awakened and thrilled, nevertheless, by Luther's heroic defiance of authority.

Much has been written about the appeal of Protestantism
to the middle classes. The tendency of recent scholarship is to be cautious about generalization on the subject. But Lutheran and particularly Calvinist teachings certainly had special appeal to the merchants and professional people of Europe, particularly in the North. These were the classes which had obvious reasons to dislike papal taxation, to envy the church's wealth, and to despise the luxury and corruption of the nonproductive bishops and monks. Salvation by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and serving God in one's calling were attractive slogans to such people—sometimes, but not always, for the purely religious reasons Luther himself would have wished. Not that the ordinary bourgeois was irreligious. More often he was a person deeply immersed in secular pursuits—building up a business, amassing wealth, carrying on a law practice, or serving a monarch—troubled in conscience by the gulf between his worldly interests and the other-worldly ideal imbued in him by the Roman Church. For this reason he might be much attracted by the idea that a man is saved by faith, not by sacramental magic and the buying of indulgences, and that one can serve God just as well as a merchant or magistrate as one can by being ordained priest or monk. Who can estimate the subtle balance of religious and secular motives in the souls of such persons, to whom Lutheranism meant an answer to the question how they might gain salvation and still remain fully in the active world of business competition and human pleasure?

To the German governing classes, the prospects of curbing the independent power of the supranational church in their particular dominions, of establishing control over the local clerical hierarchy, of possibly confiscating the lands of monasteries and even bishoprics, had particular appeal.
In 1520 Luther appealed to "the ruling class of the German people" to reform the church, since the church would not reform itself. Such an appeal to the secular rulers was nothing new, as we have seen, but it had decisive results for the Lutheran movement. Luther was a peasant and a monk, naturally inclined to think in terms of authority and obedience to lawfully constituted powers. He turned to the princes and magistrates for support, and he was not disappointed. Before his death in 1546 he saw duchy after duchy and city after city in north and central Germany break with Rome, subordinate the local church to the state, dissolve the monasteries, and simplify the church services, all under the leadership and usually at the instigation of the ruling prince or the town council. Luther himself had no intention to preach the "divine right of kings," but the circumstances in which he found himself, together with his own instincts, led him to rely on the powers that be to defend the Gospel. Most of the German rulers who took up his challenge to reform the church profited considerably in terms of political power and wealth.

One element in the appeal of Protestantism to all classes of European society, particularly in Germany, was national sentiment. The drain of ecclesiastical taxation was particularly severe in Germany because there was no strong national ruler to stand up against it and the unimpeded abuse was correspondingly resented. This resentment played no part in Luther's own early development, but soon after his attack on indulgences he sensed the support he was receiving from German national sentiment and learned to play upon it. The papacy was wealthy, corrupt—and Italian. It was intolerable, he wrote in 1520, that the pope and cardinals should mulct his countrymen and then refer contemptuously
to them as “silly drunken Germans.” “If the kingdom of France has resisted it, why do we Germans let the Romanists make fools and monkeys of us in this way?” The appeal of Protestantism to national patriotism was perhaps strongest in Germany, but national sentiment was also a major factor in the appeal of Protestantism to Scandinavians, Englishmen, Netherlanders, and some Frenchmen.

National sentiment is intimately related to language. Within twenty years of the publication of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament in 1516 with its preface urging the translation of Scripture into the common tongues of Europe, there were new versions of the Bible in German, French, and English which were to play an important part in the growth of both national sentiment and of Protestant conviction. In 1526 Tyndale began, and in 1535 Coverdale completed a new English version of the Bible which was a steppingstone to the King James Version of 1611, the most influential of all books in the forming of the English mind in the next century. By 1535 there were two new French versions, one in the Catholic spirit by Lefèvre d'Étaples, one in the Protestant by Olivétan. Luther’s matchless German Bible, begun in 1522 and completed in 1532, was the greatest of them all if measured by the vigor and vitality of its style and by its influence on a people. Everywhere Protestants became “People of the Book,” in an English historian’s phrase. The effect of translating the Scriptures into the vulgar tongues was enormous. In an age which knew no television, radio, or even newspapers, the impact of the imagery and wisdom of the Bible upon those able to read their own language was almost revolutionary. In addition to the Bible, theological controversy was carried to the reading public in thousands of printed tracts (Luther’s great appeals of 1520,
Calvin's own French translation of his Institutes in 1541, for example). Cartoons concentrated and focused the gist of the printed word. Services in Protestant churches were conducted in the common tongue. Prayer itself, as a French historian puts it, was "nationalized."

Such were some of the elements, religious and secular, relevant and irrelevant, in the appeal of Protestantism to ordinary people in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. We shall consider the mentality of those to whom Protestantism did not appeal in treating the Catholic Reformation.

The Spread of Lutheranism to 1546

It was partly converted persons, partly printed books and pamphlets, that spread Luther's ideas. Naturally Luther's students and fellow professors at Wittenberg were his first converts, and to the end of his life the university was the nerve center of what came to be called "Lutheranism." The faculty of the university was solidly behind him when he posted his 95 Theses, and his colleagues were his staunchest early supporters, even if some like Melancthon became more conservative, some like Carlstadt more radical, than their leader. After a sharp drop in the 1520's following Luther's excommunication, student enrollment rose steadily at the university, reaching a peak in the 1540's and 1550's. Between 1520 and 1560 some sixteen thousand students went to Wittenberg from all over Germany, returning home as often as not to spread Luther's ideas. Priests and monks were particularly likely to be among the early converts, in addition to students and their families.

Luther's writings in both German and Latin, spread by the printing press, reached others not reached by converted Lutherans. The primary appeal of his thought was limited
to Germans and Scandinavians, but his Latin writings were
circulated and read in the Netherlands, England, France,
Poland, Switzerland, and even in Spain and Italy in the
1520’s and 1530’s.

Wittenberg was not the only radiating center of Lutheran
ideas, however, even if it was the most important till almost
mid-century. Zurich (after 1523) and Strasbourg (after
1525) were also important centers of Protestant activity in
the same period.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was the leader of reform in
Zurich. He was a secular priest and man of affairs, both
more practical and more systematic a reformer than Luther.
Logical, even rationalistic, in his thinking and puritanical
in his moral attitudes, he was much more directly influenced
by Erasmus and the Christian Humanists than was Luther.
Although his career as a reformer had begun before he had
heard of Luther, it was Luther’s writings that provided the
decisive influence in his development, and he came to share
most of Luther’s basic beliefs. But the two reformers eventu-
ally (1529) came to an irreconcilable disagreement on
whether Christ was truly present in the sacrament of Holy
Communion or not. Luther maintained the Real Presence
and Zwingli argued that the sacrament was essentially a
memorial of the Last Supper. This was the first of the long
succession of schisms within Protestantism which were to
make its history at the same time so dynamic and so tragic.

Martin Bucer (1491-1551), a more irenic person with
something of both Luther and Zwingli in him, tried un-
successfully but heroically to make Strasbourg the bridge
between Wittenberg and Zurich. Under his leadership Stras-
bourg remained the most tolerant Protestant city in Europe
until the late 1530’s, a haven for religious refugees of every
description. Bucer's belief in predestination and in the moral supremacy of church over state influenced Calvin, who lived in Strasbourg from 1538 to 1541; and his compromise position that the body of Christ was truly present in the sacrament of Holy Communion, but only to the believing soul, influenced Thomas Cranmer and the English Prayer Book. So Strasbourg was a third important center of Protestant influence in the period before Luther's death.

To a pious Catholic, the steady spread of the Lutheran heresy in central Europe in the three decades between the 95 Theses (1517) and the death of Luther (1546) was as frightening as the spread of Nazi power after 1933 or of Soviet power after 1945 was to the democratic world. The story was much the same in town after town. A Lutheran preacher would arrive, or a local priest would become converted. Soon there were murmurings against the Mass, public debates between defenders of the old and new, perhaps some breaking of images of the saints in the churches. Then would come a petition to the town council to abolish the Mass, possibly accompanied by more violence. In the end the Mass would be abolished, a simpler service substituted with congregational singing and regular catechizing, and the clergy would marry and become servants of the state rather than of Rome. Monasteries would usually be "secularized," the revenues going to the secular government and the inmates being forced out into secular life.

The great free cities of western Germany were the first to go: Augsburg, Nuremberg, Strasbourg, and Hamburg went Lutheran almost before the echoes of Luther's defiance of the emperor at Worms in 1521 had died away. Zurich abolished the Mass in 1525, Basel in 1529. Then territorial rulers began to follow suit. Till his death in 1525 Luther's
own ruler, the elector of Saxony, cautiously protected the
reformer, and then his successor openly adopted Luther's
reforms. By 1530 Hesse, Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden
had also been added to the list of Lutheran territories. In
that year the Lutherans drafted a creed, the Augsburg Con-
fession, and in the next year a defensive alliance of Protestant
states was formed. The most important accession to Lu-
theran strength in Germany during the 1530's was Branden-
burg, but the most crucial addition to Protestant strength in
general came when the English king and Parliament for-
mally severed connection with Rome in 1534 (see below).
The last serious attempt to heal the breach in western Christ-
tendom was made at Ratisbon in 1541, when leading Pro-
estants and Catholics met in a vain attempt to discover a
formula which would provide common ground for both
sides. By 1546, when Luther died, Germany was hopelessly
divided between Lutheran and Catholic states and on the
verge of religious war; England and Scandinavia were lost
to the papacy; and Lutheran doctrines were apparently
spreading in the Netherlands and in the towns of northern
France. The movement to reform the church had resulted
in a schism far more dangerous to the unity of Catholic
Christianity than any since the final separation between
Roman and Eastern Orthodox Christianity in 1054.

The Left Wing

To religious conservatives, as we have noted, Lutheranism
looked like unbounded revolution. To some in Europe, how-
ever, Luther appeared to be a conservative if not a reac-
tionary at heart, who had misled the people by beckoning
them forward against the foe and then suddenly calling a
halt. These were the religious radicals, men who believed
the old order was corrupt to the very roots. In spite of all Luther's talk about salvation by faith alone, the authority of the Word, and the priesthood of all believers, the Lutheran churches retained an ordained clergy who administered the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, who considered the whole population of a given territory members of their church, and who looked to the state for salary and support. In other words, the Lutheran churches were still "established churches." To those in the "left wing" of the movement, all this was a betrayal of what was really revolutionary in Luther's teaching. Some of them perhaps unconsciously looked back to mediaeval heretical traditions which had emphasized hatred of the clergy, the authority of Scripture, and puritanical fear of any compromise with worldliness. In any case, these radicals felt that official Protestantism was not much better than mediaeval Catholicism. They agreed with Luther that what was needed was a restoration of the beliefs and practices of the early church, but they saw in the Lutheran churches simply a caricature of the ideal. One of their favorite words was "restitution," by which they meant literally turning the clock back to the first century and restoring the spirit and institutions of the Apostolic Age.

These radicals were generally called "Anabaptists," meaning persons who believed in "rebaptism," which had been condemned as heresy ten centuries before in Justinian's Code. But they called themselves simply "Baptists," meaning that they thought infant baptism no sacrament at all and adult baptism the only true test of membership in the Christian church. It was their conception of the church which was their most characteristic and most influential belief. The Christian church, they insisted, is a voluntary
association of believers who have experienced spiritual regeneration and have been baptized into membership—as the early Christians were—as adults. The church is not identical with society at large, as Luther and Calvin, no less than the pope himself, insisted it was. It is a "gathered" church, a company of saints (and therefore a minority), a holy community subject to strict entrance requirements and strenuous discipline. It is a light set upon a hill, a candle shining in a naughty world. Like the monasteries of the Middle Ages, the Anabaptist church was to influence society by the example of its purity—and its martyrdom. Unlike the monks, its members remained laymen and married, but they often cut themselves strictly off from the world, sometimes to the point of refusing to bear arms, to hold political office, or to take an oath. Conversely they stoutly maintained that the state has no rightful power over religion and that the secular magistrate must keep his hands off the church.

Within Anabaptist churches a strict sort of democracy applied, again modeled after the early church. All believers were equal. Some communities followed the communism in goods described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Each believer was both priest to his fellow believer and missionary to the unbeliever (the missionary zeal of the early Anabaptists was remarkable). Each church elected its own pastor or minister. In fact, the most important symbolic moment in the early development of Anabaptism was the scene on Easter 1525 at the little town of Waldshut in southern Germany, when Balthasar Hübmaier resigned as Catholic priest and was immediately elected minister by his congregation. The congregational principle of church organization here dramatized for the first time was to have
an enormously important future. The idea of separation of church and state—"a free church in a free state"—germinated among the left-wing religious groups of the early sixteenth century. It was the Anabaptists, not the leading Protestant reformers, who first caught the vision of thoroughgoing religious freedom—the right of religious groups to associate voluntarily, to elect a minister, to maintain standards of admission and continuing membership, all without interference from the state.

The social background of Anabaptism was fairly homogeneous. Although middle-class intellectuals played an important part in the movement, the radical sects drew most of their membership from the lower classes—peasants, craftsmen, weavers, miners—particularly those who were hard hit by the economic changes and social dislocations of the age. Members of the upper classes were quick to notice the apparent connection between social discontent and religious heresy. The weaving town of Zwickau in southern Saxony, for instance, already a hotbed of Waldensian heresy, was one of the earliest centers of Anabaptist agitation (1521). Zurich, Basel, Strasbourg, Nuremberg, and Augsburg, industrial cities which went over to Lutheran or Zwinglian ideas at an early stage, were also centers of radical activity at one time or another. In fact, it was the official Protestant churches—Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Calvinist—not the Roman Church, which had the most difficult time dealing with Anabaptism. Luther and Calvin cannot be understood unless one remembers that they were fighting a two-front war of ideas from the very beginning against Romanism on the right and Anabaptism on the left. If Luther and Calvin in the end preserved a great deal of mediaeval Christianity, it was because of the fear of social and religious revolution from
below, which they felt perhaps even more keenly than their Catholic opponents because of the widespread accusation that they themselves were really responsible for starting the revolutionary process.

The radical sects were persecuted and martyred with a hysterical persistence which is hard at first sight to explain. The great majority of those called Anabaptists were sober, hard-working, pious people, with strong leanings toward pacifism and quietism. Most of them had little if any education. Most of them were poor, many of them embittered by social and economic oppression. The impact upon such people of direct contact with the Bible in the vernacular, either through reading or preaching, was strange and unpredictable. The conviction grew rapidly among such people that the end of the world was at hand, that God was about to usher in the millennium or thousand-year rule of the saints predicted in Revelation 20, and that they, not the Catholics or Lutherans, were God’s people, the instruments of His mysterious will. To most of them it was through the suffering and martyrdom of His chosen flock that God would bring history to a close. “Suffering is the way, the door, and the means to God, the door into the sheep-stall.” “A Christian without suffering is like an untrained doctor, like a house whose beam has not been hewn.” A few believed that God meant to use them as human instruments of his wrath in the final struggle with evil. These few rejected suffering in favor of violence. How many there were of this kind we shall never know, but there were enough to send a thrill of terror through the ruling classes and fan the flames of persecution.

Two events in particular shaped the fate of Anabaptism and marked the chronological limits of what might be called
the Anabaptist movement: the Peasants’ War of 1524–1525 and the rising at Münster in 1534–1535. Anabaptist groups were beginning to appear in Switzerland and southern Germany when the Peasants’ War broke out in these same districts. The causes of this greatest of sixteenth-century lower-class uprisings had relatively little to do with religion. They lay deep in the stresses and strains produced in feudalism and the old manorial system by the new economic forces. But one of the most prominent of the rebels’ demands was that each community be given the right to choose its own pastor, and some Anabaptist leaders were involved. The rebellion was a bloody business, and its suppression even more bloody. Luther was at first convinced that blame for the rising was about equally divided between the nobility and the peasantry, but as the violence increased, he turned on the rebels with bitter vituperation.

The net result of the war was a decade of upper-class panic and social repression which had its repercussions in religion as well as politics. In the late 1520’s savage laws for the punishment of Anabaptists were revived or instituted all over Europe and a reign of terror began in which hundreds of religious radicals of all kinds were tortured, burned, drowned, or put to the sword. Although permanently stamped out in most of Germany, groups of survivors fled to Moravia, Poland, the lower Rhine Valley, and the Netherlands, whence they eventually had their influence on England and America. In 1534–1535 the city of Münster became by chance a haven for Anabaptists of the more wild-eyed variety, who set up a sort of military communistic regime which lasted about a year. The radicals were finally defeated and slaughtered by an army raised with the co-operation of both Lutherans and Catholics. Violence was now finally
discredited, and the Anabaptists under Menno Simons’ leadership (Mennonites) turned unanimously to the way of suffering, the way that had always been that of the majority.

In attempting to describe the essence of Anabaptism, we have inevitably made the whole left wing of the Reformation seem more homogeneous than it really was. Roland H. Bainton, the leading American student of the subject, points out that the left wing included a bewildering variety of sects and individuals with a baffling variety of beliefs, often incompatible. They ranged all the way from individualistic mystics and rationalistic Unitarians to evangelical pietists, Biblical literalists, and fanatical millennialists. These were people “distraught by persecution and wrought up to a temperature at which incompatibles fuse on an emotional rather than a logical level,” Bainton writes; “A thermometer is more appropriate than a ruler for measuring such theologies.” Nevertheless, despite this variety, there is no denying the importance for the later history of both church and state of the leading ideas on which nearly all Anabaptists agreed: restitution of primitive Christianity, the church as a voluntary association of believers, and separation of church and state.

The Case of England

“The one definite thing which can be said about the Reformation in England,” writes Sir Maurice Powicke, “is that it was an act of State.” The ecclesiastical revolution

which took place in England during the reign of Henry VIII (1509–1547) has been traditionally difficult to describe because it arose unexpectedly out of a seemingly trivial personal matter, because the juridical breach with the papacy preceded rather than followed doctrinal difference, and because there has always been wide disagreement about the proper interpretation of what happened. English historians would have us believe that the case of England was unique, but if there were peculiar elements in the English Reformation, there were many other elements which had strong parallels elsewhere.

In a sense, the adoption of Lutheranism on the continent, whether in a free city like Augsburg, an electorate like Brandenburg, or a monarchy like Sweden, was always "an act of state." Acts of legislation by the municipal council or by the prince and his estates were always the decisive event, although preaching, disputation, and popular agitation were the usual preludes to political action. Throughout Europe, Protestantism failed to take root and grow wherever it was unable to capture the state or at least to stake out some territorial or legal basis for minority existence (as in France). In this sense there was nothing unique about the English developments. But England was the largest and most important political unit to secede at one blow from Catholic Christendom. The intricate relationship between political and religious factors in the process may be studied in England, therefore, on a relatively large scale. This is worth doing for the further reason that the accession of England to the Protestant cause was in a sense decisive. If England had remained Catholic, it seems fairly certain that Protestantism later on could not have maintained itself in the Netherlands, and it is at least arguable that in this case all
of Europe except for a few innocuous Lutheran states in Germany might have been won back to Roman Christianity by the end of the century.

Henry VIII’s desire to gain an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon because he needed a male heir to the throne and because he wanted to marry Anne Boleyn was the direct cause of England’s breach with the papal jurisdiction. In 1527 Catherine was past childbearing; the lack of a male heir might throw England into a new War of the Roses; and the king was infatuated with Anne. Catherine was the emperor Charles V’s aunt, and Pope Clement VII was under the emperor’s thumb. It was not surprising, therefore—although it was exasperating to Henry—that the pope should deny the king’s desire. When tact and persuasion failed, Henry resorted to threats. Wolsey failed to get his monarch what he wanted, was cast down from power, and died. The new royal secretary, Thomas Cromwell, was more unscrupulous if less showy. Together he and the king worked to mobilize the whole nation in Henry’s support in order to threaten the pope with secession from papal jurisdiction unless the annulment were granted. Parliament was summoned in 1529. In 1531 the English clergy assembled in Convocation were frightened into acknowledging that Henry was “Supreme Head of the Church in England,” and next year they gave up their right to make laws for the church in Convocation apart from king and Parliament. In the spring of 1533 Anne was pregnant and the pace was quickened. Threats gave way to acts. Parliament passed a statute cutting off appeals from English ecclesiastical courts to Rome, and the new archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, straightway held court and granted Henry his annulment, enabling him to make Anne his queen. In 1534
a series of acts of Parliament finally stopped all financial payments and judicial appeals to Rome, declared that “the King’s Majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be . . . the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England,” and fixed the succession to the throne upon the children of Henry and Anne (their only child Elizabeth was born in September 1533). Within the next few years some 550 English monasteries were dissolved, their property confiscated by the crown, and their 7,000 inmates pensioned and thrust out into secular life. Henry had cut England off from obedience to the pope.

All this amounted to a revolution. In mediaeval England, as in the rest of Christendom, church and state had been considered co-ordinate and complementary authorities, no matter how confusing the conflicts and compromises between the two powers might be. Spiritual jurisdiction had belonged to the pope and the clergy, temporal jurisdiction to the king and his representatives. It was hard to draw the line in practice, but in theory there was a clear sharp difference between the two powers. Now the king was “Supreme Head of the Church of England.” What did this mean? Had the state absorbed the church? Had Henry stepped into the pope’s shoes so far as one nation was concerned (without of course claiming the power of a priest to administer the sacraments)? The answer was a tentative yes, but no clear answer ever was given. The closest approach was the famous preamble to the Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1533, which argued that

By divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire [that is, subject to no higher authority] . . . governed by one Supreme Head and King . . . unto whom a body
politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people divided in terms and by names of Spiritualy and Temporalty, be bounden and owe to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience; he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God with plenary, whole, and entire power . . . without restraint or provocation [appeal] to any foreign princes or potentates of the world.

This was the theory then: Whatever other nations in Christendom might be, England was a sovereign territorial state subject to a single monarch; within this state clergy and laity alike were subjects owing obedience to the king; no foreign prince, including the bishop of Rome, had any jurisdiction whatever in England. And yet this theory left all the important questions really unanswered. What then is the “Catholic Church”? Where is the ultimate authority in the church? Did this mean that England had automatically joined the Lutheran fold? Henry insisted not. In doctrine and liturgy, the Church of England still belonged to the Catholic Church, and an “Act abolishing diversity of opinions” was put through Parliament in 1539 to stress this fact by reaffirming the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and several other points of orthodox belief. But a significant phrase in the Act of Supremacy of 1534, repeated in other Tudor legislation, gave the king “full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all . . . errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be,” in the English Church. In effect, this was the most spectacular response to Luther’s appeal of 1520 to the ruling powers of the secular order to take in hand the matter of ecclesiastical reform since the clergy had failed to reform themselves. It is not far wrong to say that what happened
in England during the reign of Henry VIII was the establishment of the legal supremacy of the state over the church.

The revolution was accomplished with relatively little bloodshed, the matchless martyrdom of Sir Thomas More (1535) being the best known of the executions. There were several reasons for this. Englishmen and their king had vivid memories of the violence and anarchy of the Wars of the Roses and wanted no repetition of civil war. Henry moved cautiously and with ostentatious respect for legality. Most people sympathized warmly with Catherine as a much put-upon woman, but Henry dragged the red herrings of national patriotism and anticlerical feeling across the trail of his intentions so skillfully that he was able to direct the animosity of people and Parliament against the pope and the clergy at every crucial point of the negotiations. No significant changes were made in the church services which the ordinary Englishman attended, so no real consciousness of revolution reached him. Furthermore, the actual issues were always confused and, as always in revolutions, even the leaders could not see clearly where they were going. The net result was that Englishmen generally accepted the breach with Rome without effective protest, although there is no evidence that the majority wanted it.

Sir Thomas More, on trial for his life against a trumped-up charge of treason to his king, saw to the heart of the issue in a way that almost no other did:

Therefore am I not bounden, my Lord, to conform my conscience to the Council of one realm against the general Council of Christendom. For of theforesaid holy bishops I have, for every bishop of yours [who backed the king], above one hundred; and for one Council or Parliament of yours (God knoweth what manner of one), I have all the Councils made these thou-
sand years. And for this one kingdom, I have all other Christian realms.6

Luther's conscience supported the individual against the Catholic Church. More's conscience supported the universal church against the national state.

By the time of Henry VIII's death it was clear that England was committed to moving in a certain direction and could not stand still as the aging king might have wished. Henry had unleashed the dangerously powerful new force of national sentiment to gain his way with the pope. He had held the line on doctrine, but he had consented to having English Bibles set up in all the churches. Men were reading the Scriptures and what came out of Wittenberg and Zurich and Strasbourg. There was a Protestant party led by the archbishop Cranmer. It was a tiny minority, but it was a determined and intelligent minority. England in 1547 was headed in the direction of more intense patriotism and more extreme Protestantism.

The Sovereignty of God

Luther was a religious leader of marvelous sensitivity to universal human needs, but he was not the sort of person to give the movement he initiated a systematic theology and a disciplined ecclesiastical organization. The second generation of Protestant reformers sensed the need for these things, and it was John Calvin (1509–1564), above all, and the church which he inspired at Geneva, which supplied them. Calvin was the theologian and organizer of the Protestant movement.

Industrious scholars have demonstrated that Calvin never

had a truly original idea in his life; his leading ideas of doctrine and church organization can all be traced to Luther, Bucer, Augustine or other Fathers, or the Bible itself. But the result was a creative achievement nevertheless. "Calvinism" was a distinct form of Protestant Christianity with a characteristic flavor to its theology, its ethics, and its social organization. Furthermore, it became the militant, international form of Protestantism, imbued with a sense of its own destiny to conquer men's souls and usher in the Kingdom of God. In the form of "Puritanism" it left a deep mark on both British and American civilization.

Calvin shared with Luther the four central Protestant beliefs already described (p. 53). But he was born a generation after Luther in a different land, he was a far different sort of person, and his education and career were significantly different. He was a Frenchman, educated as a Humanist and a lawyer. To this education he seems to have owed his fine style both in Latin and French, his interest in ethical problems, and his legal cast of mind. Converted to Protestant beliefs about 1533, he meant to follow a career of scholarship and writing, but on a chance visit to Geneva in 1536 the local Protestant leader, William Farel, called down a "frightful imprecation" upon him if he refused to set aside his scholarly plans and help the cause of the Gospel in Geneva. Unwillingly Calvin stayed, and except for three years of exile during which he visited Bucer in Strasbourg (1538–1541), he remained in Geneva as the city's leading minister and unofficial "city manager" until his death.

The contrast with Luther was striking. It appears in the portraits of the two men. As Luther grew older his face and figure filled out, and a kind of confidence and reconciliation with himself is suggested in the lines of eyes and mouth.
As Calvin grew older he became even thinner than he was as a young man, and the perpendicular lines of his long nose and firm, thin lips suggest the increasingly flintlike qualities of his mind and personality. He demanded much of himself and of others. He had great organizing and executive ability. He could inspire passionate devotion in his followers—and equally passionate hatred in his enemies. Luther was a peasant, a monk, and a university professor; Calvin, a scholar and lawyer called to a turbulent public ministry in a flourishing business community. Naturally they were impressed by different needs and emphasized different Christian solutions. The foundations were the same, but the structures of doctrine and practice erected at Wittenberg and Geneva were different in many important respects.

Calvin's two most characteristic achievements were his great manual of Protestant theology, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first edition 1536, final edition 1559), and the well-organized and tightly disciplined church which he set up in Geneva after 1541. In the first, he played the part in Protestant history which Thomas Aquinas had played for mediaeval Catholicism in summarizing and systematizing doctrine. In the second, he played the part taken in Catholic history by Innocent III and the other great mediaeval popes. Rarely are theoretical and practical abilities combined in one man as they were in Calvin. His *Institutes* went through edition after edition in almost every major European language and influenced the thought of generations of Protestants in Europe and America. The Genevan church was the model for organizing what were called "the Reformed churches" of France, the Netherlands, Scotland, parts of Germany, Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary. From the 1540's and 1550's on, it was to Geneva that young Protestant en-
thusiasts went from all over Europe to see what John Knox called “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the apostles.” It was there that they received the theological training and the ideas of church and state which they carried back home to put into practice. And it was from Geneva that Calvin himself kept in touch with many of them in a voluminous correspondence. To his followers, Geneva seemed to be the beachhead established by God from which the victory of the Kingdom would some day be organized. To Roman Catholics, Geneva was the center of a satanic international conspiracy, subversive of all government and religion.

Calvin’s central belief around which all else revolved was the absolute sovereignty of God. “God asserts His possession of omnipotence,” he wrote, “and claims our acknowledgment of this attribute; not such as is imagined by sophists, vain, idle, and almost asleep, but vigilant, efficacious, operative, and engaged in continual action.” God is “the Arbiter and Governor of all things, who, in His own wisdom, has, from the remotest eternity, decreed what He would do, and now, by His own power, executes what He has decreed.” It follows that He “has once and for all determined, both whom He would admit to salvation, and whom He would condemn to destruction.” If this seems unjust by human standards, we must remember that “the will of God is the highest rule of justice, so that what He wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because He wills it.”

The sovereignty of God with its corollary of predestination had been implicit in Luther’s conviction that in the process of salvation God does everything, man nothing.

6 Institutes I, 16, 3; I, 16, 8; III, 21, 7; III, 23, 2. Tr. by John Allen (Philadelphia, 1930).
Luther had insisted upon this principle in arguing against Erasmus' Humanistic belief in man's power at least to cooperate with God, and Bucer had worked the principle out still further. After his visit with Bucer, Calvin made the sovereignty of God the main theme of his Institutes. It had several important corollaries.

The first was that if only God is sovereign, then no man—whether he be pope or king—has any claim to absolute power. Certainly the Church of Rome has no such claim. Nor in the last analysis has any secular government. Calvin was very careful not to preach what we would call the "right of revolution"; the burden of his teaching was obedience to legally constituted governments. But he dropped one very fruitful hint at the close of the Institutes which was developed by his followers, particularly where they were a religious minority (as they were almost everywhere), into the doctrine of constitutional resistance to tyranny. This was the hint that in countries which have representative assemblies it is the right and duty of these assemblies to resist the wrongful doings of monarchs. Calvinist minorities in France, Scotland, and the Netherlands were to insist, as John Knox did before Mary Queen of Scots, that "right religion takes neither original [origin] nor authority from worldly princes but from the eternal God alone, so are not subjects bound to frame their religion according to the appetite of their princes." Peter's reply to the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29)—"One must obey God rather than men"—was a favorite text with these stubborn, high-minded followers of Calvin who put the sovereignty of God before the sovereignty of man. One of the key factors in the development of modern constitutional government was the resistance of
Calvinist minorities to the exercise of arbitrary power by monarchs.

Another corollary was that this busy, active, sovereign God uses His elect for a purpose: to witness to His glory and to usher in His Kingdom. Good works cannot save a man, but God does good works through men. The whole world is “the theatre of God's glory.” He is working out His majestic and inscrutable purpose in His church, advancing its cause, overthrowing its enemies, purifying its members. The ethic of Calvinists, therefore, was dynamic, activistic, and, above all, social. Calvin's writings are filled with military terminology. God's people are an army on the march, the battle is hot and nearing its climax. There is no sure sign in this world of who belongs to the army of the elect and who does not, but it does no good to worry about one's salvation since all is predestined. What counts is the sense of being used by God to carry out His historical purpose—as Calvin was sure God had used him by snatching him from the scholar's cloister to do battle against the enemies of the Gospel in Geneva. The sovereignty of God meant that God was always working through men and through history. The danger was that it was so easy for Calvin's followers to become convinced that they were God's elect and the sole instruments of His will.

A final corollary was that God reveals His sovereignty through His Word and exercises it directly through His church. To Luther, God's Word was contained in the Bible, but to Calvin the Word was the Bible, all of it. The Bible then was a Christian's first and last authority. God has revealed in it everything necessary, and nothing unnecessary, for man to know about his salvation. The Bible is the founda-
tion of the church, not the church of the Bible as Romanists maintained. But the church nevertheless has a very important function to fulfill. The church is a divine institution in which the Word is properly preached and the sacraments rightly administered. It is in no way subject to the secular government except in obviously secular matters, and it has the duty of guiding the secular power in spiritual matters. It has therefore a real autonomy and initiative as a social institution, in conformity with the principle that God alone is its sovereign. In all the Calvinist churches the principle of congregational election was maintained in choosing the four orders of ministers, teachers, elders, and deacons, and this principle blended easily with Anabaptist principles in the seventeenth century to produce a genuine democracy in English left-wing churches, a practice which was an important root of modern democracy. But in practice the Calvinist clergy exercised a strong control over their congregations in matters of right belief and conduct. The Reformed Churches operated on the principle of according the laity an important share in church government but reserving initiative and leadership to the clergy.

It may already have struck the reader that what Calvin set himself to build was a kind of non-Roman Catholicism. Calvin was bitterly antipapal, but he was also deeply fearful of the threat of anarchy from the Anabaptists on the left. As a result he saw the importance of discipline and organization, of authority and historical continuity, more clearly than Luther. He denied none of Luther’s basic beliefs, but the shape he gave to Protestant theology and church organization is in some ways more reminiscent of the scholasticism and ecclesiastical supremacy of the thirteenth century than it is of Lutheranism, Anglicanism, or Anabaptism.
Calvin's international Reformed Church with its "colloquies" and "synods," in France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and elsewhere, independent of the state, guided by a devout and educated clergy, claiming to influence and shape the whole of life, thinking of itself as a militant army of God—all this was very like the church of the Crusades and the Schoolmen. And yet at the same time the Reformed churches were thoroughly Protestant. They had no head on earth—however much his enemies might joke about Calvin as the Protestant pope. The laity never allowed the Calvinist ministry to regain the position of the Catholic priesthood. And the Calvinist churches never succeeded in subordinating secular governments to theocratic control except for a short time in Geneva and New England. Calvinism belonged unmistakably to Protestantism, but it paradoxically preserved many lines of continuity with mediaeval Christianity.

The year 1559 may be taken to mark the coming of age of Calvinism. In that year Calvin published the definitive edition of the Institutes and founded the University of Geneva. During the same year the first national synod of Reformed Churches met in France, Calvinism was taking deep root in the Netherlands and central Europe, and ministers trained in Geneva were hurrying back to England from their exile on the continent during Mary's reign. In the following year, John Knox worked a Calvinist revolution in Scotland. Militant Protestantism seemed to be irresistibly on the march.

The Catholic Reformation

The religious upheaval of the sixteenth century included two major movements: a Protestant Reformation, which because of its newness and complexity we have described
his imagination—vividly picturing to himself, for instance, the horrors of hell and the sufferings of Christ—he can so strengthen his will as to make the choice for God. Where Luther and Protestantism ended in a belief in predestination and the utter sovereignty of God, Loyola and the Catholic Church insisted upon man’s free will and his power to cooperate with God—even, according to Loyola, to the point of influencing the course of the battle between the armies of God and of Satan by his choice. Luther denied man’s free will; Loyola glorified it and set out to discipline it by the use of imagination. The record of his method, *Spiritual Exercises*, was one of the most influential books of the century.

The Society of Jesus, which Loyola founded and which the pope approved in 1540, bore the stamp of its founder’s personality in its every rule. The aim of the order was simple and unoriginal: to restore the Roman Catholic Church to the position of spiritual power and temporal influence which it had held three centuries before. It was the methods which were relatively new. Their keynote was a thoroughly modern idea: efficiency. Everything was to be subordinated to the major aim of bringing all men within the fold of the church. The Society or Company of Jesus was to be fashioned into an efficient fighting weapon, absolutely obedient to the pope and ready to believe that “what seems black is white if the hierarchical church so teaches.” The *Constitutions* of the order are even more saturated in military terminology than Calvin’s writings. The Jesuit was to wear no distinctive habit but to dress as his particular job of priest, teacher, or missionary might demand. He was not to exhaust himself by ascetic practices but to remember that tangible results in the service of the church are what count.
He was not to trouble sensitive consciences in the confessional, but to remind the sinner that only acts of deliberate will are truly sinful and so encourage him not to lose heart. “Send no one away dejected,” wrote Loyola. “God asks nothing impossible,” he believed—and his followers were the great apostles of the possible. They saw the importance of influencing young minds, and their schools and universities were models of rational planning and discipline, the envy of Protestants. They saw the advantage of winning the key persons in society, and so became confessors to the great. Their missions to India and China gained spectacular results in conversions, partly by not demanding too much of the convert. In central Europe they were the shock troops of Catholic counterattack against Protestantism, and by the end of the century Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, and south Germany—which had all seemed on the verge of going Protestant—were safely back in the Catholic camp with only Protestant minorities within their borders. The Jesuits were the hard core of the Catholic Reformation, illustrating nicely the intimate connection between spiritual revival and shrewd adaptation of means to ends in the cause of “counter reformation.”

Individual saints and even devoted monastic orders could hardly accomplish much unless means were found to reform the whole clerical hierarchy from the pope down to the parish clergy. The two traditional approaches to this problem were either to demand that the papacy reform itself or that a general council of the whole church be summoned to do the job. Both approaches were tried in the sixteenth century, with some success in each. Beginning with Paul III (1534–1549), men of more conscience and moral responsibility began to be elected to the papacy, and they in turn
appointed abler cardinals. Abuses were not reformed overnight, but after mid-century the popes were generally capable and vigorous men, and sometimes zealous reformers like Pius V (1566–1572). The College of Cardinals, organized at the end of the century into standing committees called congregations, was an integral part of the reformed papacy.

The Council of Trent, held in three separate sessions (1545–1547, 1551–1552, 1562–1563), was the focal point of all the reforming efforts within the church. There were so many conflicting views of what a general council might accomplish that it is a wonder any was summoned at all. The emperor Charles V was the strongest supporter of a council, hoping that the Protestants would attend (which they never did) and that the religious schism would be healed. King Francis I of France was not enthusiastic about a council unless he could dominate it. Many bishops throughout Europe hoped that a council would increase their local authority and their independence of the papacy. The popes were generally afraid of summoning a council for fear that it would fall under the control of an alliance between the bishops and the secular rulers, who would whittle down the papal power and perhaps compromise with Protestantism.

The result was a papal triumph. In spite of the difficulties, a general council met at Trent. From the beginning the popes managed to exclude the influence of lay rulers from the Council's important decisions and to dominate the voting by seeing that there was always a working majority of Italian prelates and (in the later sessions) a shock force of Jesuits to guide discussion. Dogmatic definition and administrative reforms were taken up in alternate sittings. The
major tenets of mediaeval Catholic belief which had been challenged by Protestantism were now for the first time sharply defined and made dogma: salvation was not by faith alone, but by faith and works combined; authority lay not in the Bible alone, but in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible as interpreted by the church, and in the traditions which were preserved in the church. The authority of the bishops within their dioceses was somewhat expanded, but they were more explicitly subjected to papal control. Moral reforms were agreed upon and provision made for establishing seminaries for the training of priests in every diocese. A creed binding upon the clergy was drawn up, and the sacraments were redefined.

The upshot was that the Catholic Church closed its ranks, formulated its fundamental dogma in opposition to Protestantism, provided for some, though by no means all, the moral and administrative reform demanded by various parties, and thus saved over half of Europe for Roman Catholicism. All this was not accomplished without coercion. The mediaeval Inquisition was revived in somewhat different forms in Spain (1480), the Netherlands (1523), and Italy (1542). A Roman Index of prohibited books was drawn up in 1559, to be followed by another authorized by the Council of Trent and afterward kept up to date by a “Congregation of the Index” in the College of Cardinals. But the essential fact was that in the face of Protestant appeals to the secular power to reform the church and of Catholic monarchs’ attempts to set up national churches, the Roman Church had reasserted its spiritual independence. It had strengthened its own internal organization and had regained much if not all of the moral prestige it had lost during the later Middle Ages. Critics accused the Fathers
at Trent of stifling further intellectual growth in the church by putting believers in dogmatic strait jackets. And enemies of the Jesuits accused them of fatal compromises with worldly methods and of "putting cushions under sinners' elbows." But the achievement was considerable. Granting the irrevocable loss of Protestant lands and peoples, the Church of Rome was far stronger and better able to face the future in 1600 than it had been in 1500.

The Religious Balance Sheet

It is not easy to sum up the historical significance of the religious upheaval in a few words. We see now that the religious unity of western Christendom was permanently shattered, but the full significance of this fact was not borne in upon Europeans all at once. At first Luther's followers thought him so obviously right that the Catholic Church would inevitably adopt his ideas. Others thought him so obviously a heretic that sooner or later he would be burned and his movement wither away. After all, the papal schism of the fourteenth century had finally been healed, and one heretical movement after another in the history of the church had either been wiped out or walled off and rendered innocuous. None of the Protestant leaders of the first and second generations thought they were breaking from the true, universal, catholic Church of Christ, but only from a false Roman version of it. Until the conference of 1541 between Protestants and Catholics at Ratisbon, reunion always seemed a possibility.

As time went on, however, a second stage was imperceptibly reached in the thinking of ordinary men. The uneasy, half-conscious conviction grew that a stalemate had been reached. Catholicism could not crush out the new heresy,
and Protestantism could not win over Rome. In this second stage, there was as yet no real emotional or intellectual acceptance of the fact of stalemate, only bitter admission that it was so. The vast majority of men were still convinced that religious truth was one. Truth stood on one side, error on the other. Error meant not only individual damnation, but infection of others and social subversion. Naturally the corollary was coercion—inquisition and persecution, civil war and international war. At this stage the coercion was perhaps even more bitter because of the haunting suspicion in some minds that it might not prove effective. Almost no one could yet attain the view that in two contending religious systems, there might be some truth on both sides, and that if only enough men could see this, the two systems might peacefully coexist on the same continent and even in the same state. The spirit of the mid-sixteenth century is exactly expressed by the inquisitor who remarked, “It is no great matter whether they that die on account of religion be guilty or innocent, provided we terrify the people by such examples.”

The third stage of religious toleration resulting from full acceptance of the fact of religious pluralism and diversity was only hinted at before 1600 in the attitudes of mystics, Christian Humanists like Erasmus, radical Protestants like Sebastian Castellio (whom Calvin hounded out of Geneva), skeptics like Michel de Montaigne, and practical politicians like Queen Elizabeth of England and King Henry IV of France.

One thing seems clear. The Protestant and Catholic Reforms temporarily halted the underlying trend toward

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secularization in European society. Even granting the obvious secular tendencies in both Calvinist and Jesuit ethics, for example, it remains true that sixteenth-century Europe was more troubled by religious concerns than fifteenth-century Europe. Luther "revived the Christian consciousness of Europe," Roland Bainton writes; "religion became again a dominant factor even in politics for another century and a half. Men cared enough for the faith to die for it and to kill for it. If there is any sense remaining of Christian civilization in the West, this man Luther in no small measure deserves the credit." 8

In more concrete terms, this meant that at the height of "the Renaissance"—the moment in European history when the church's prestige seemed near extinction, the secular national state irresistibly on the rise, and social life in general becoming more and more permeated by secular ideals—Christian ideals and institutions acquired a new autonomy and dynamism. The state churches of Germany and England of the 1530's were not the final solution. By mid-century the Calvinists and the Jesuits were setting the pace, each representing a sort of supranational religious ideology embodied in a militant organization, proselytizing across national boundaries, and calling for an allegiance transcending every secular political tie. The clash of these new militant religious ideologies with the already deep-rooted dynastic and national loyalties gave the struggle for power of the later sixteenth century its peculiar character and intensity.

CHAPTER III

The Struggle for Power

The latter half of the sixteenth century witnessed a sharp struggle for power resulting from the convergence of forces liberated by the religious upheavals of the preceding period. Europe's economy was subjected to severe strain by the spectacular rise in prices which began about the middle of the century. The war expenditures and devaluation policies of European governments had something to do with the inflationary movement, but the main cause was the mounting flood of precious metal which poured into Europe from Spanish America after the opening of the fabulously rich silver mines at Potosí in Peru (1545). The influx of bullion far surpassed the normal need of a growing economy for an expanding medium of exchange and so pushed prices skyward, first in Spain and then in the rest of Europe. As always, inflation led to social stress, hurting the classes which like the older nobility depended upon fairly fixed incomes and favoring the entrepreneur and speculator. A "new nobility" began to appear in England and France, consisting of members of the bourgeoisie or the gentry who were able to climb to titles of nobility amid the economic or political ruin of older feudal families.

Religious animosities added to the general tension. Eu-