

Mary Tudor and the Protestants

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THE reign of Mary Tudor, the first of England's five Queens Regnant, has left an evil memory behind in the land over which she ruled, and in the English-speaking world which inherits its historic tradition. Her successor, Elizabeth I, reversed her policies and rooted up once more the ancient Catholic Faith which she had sought to re-establish: the Protestants whom her Government had persecuted returned to power, and launched against the dead Queen, her Bishops and Catholicism a campaign of propaganda throughout the land, of which the most famous organ was the brilliant, vivid and mendacious Book of Martyrs of John Foxe.

The "hate-campaign" was sustained for generations, and was successful in creating a deeply-rooted prejudice, among Englishmen, against the Faith of their Catholic ancestors. The marks of this propaganda are still visible, even in this present time, when Protestant religion has become a vague shadow for vast multitudes, and the religious controversies of the Reformation period are largely forgotten.

It is true that since the last century, the name "Bloody Mary" no longer appears in historical textbooks: and recent historians have done much to rehabilitate the character of the Queen. The latest of her lives, by a non-Catholic historian, Miss Prescott, is written with sensitive sympathy for her aims and outlook and splendid moral courage: the great Professor Keith Feiling has called her "this most upright of the Tudors." But the smoke of the fires of Smithfield still hangs about her name, and that of the Church which she served so devotedly.

The story of the long, bitter persecution of Catholics under Elizabeth I and the Stuarts is hardly at all remembered, save by the remnant of the old Faith: but the memory of the brief anti-Protestant drive of four hundred years ago survives. Because of it, a great number of people still respond coldly to accounts of the contemporary persecution of Catholics in Eastern Europe and Asia. "If these people had the power," they reflect, "they would probably treat their opponents in the same way - just as they did in the reign of Mary."

The Heretic: Protestant and Catholic Views.

My object is not to justify the Marian persecution which was unjustifiable, as I hope to show, even in terms of the Catholic Canon Law of the Queen's own time. It is rather to explain the situation which led to this grave crime and gross error of policy, and to clear up some common misconceptions about it. To begin with, it is necessary to understand the attitudes of both sides to "religious freedom" and the use of the civil power against religious dissidents.

It has been suggested by historians of the reign that Mary Tudor, as a devout Catholic regarded the burning of heretics as a sort of sacrifice to God. This idea of a human holocaust acceptable to the orthodox Divinity has never, of course, been held by Catholics at any period in the Church's history - though, curiously enough, it is to be found among some individuals in the ranks of those whom the Queen persecuted - for example, the Reformer, Bullinger, who advises that the Genevans should

put the Unitarian, Servetus, to death, that the world may perceive their city's desire to have Christ's glory maintained inviolate!

The great Knox, too, prayed that God in His mercy might "stir up some Phineas, Helias or Jehu, that the blood of abominable idolators may pacify His wrath." The Catholics of the sixteenth century did, however, hold that the heretic was a criminal, and a very great one, like the thief, the murderer and the traitor, and that no truly Christian State could treat his perversity with tolerance. "There cannot," declared Cardinal Pole, in a sermon of 1557, "be a greater work of cruelty against the commonwealth, than to nourish or favour any such. For, be you assured, there is no kind of treason to be compared to theirs: who, as it were, undermining the chief foundation of all commonwealth, which is religion, maketh an entry to all kind of vices in the most heinous manner..."

In this principle they were fully agreed with their Reforming opponents - the only difference lying in the estimate of what was heresy. For the Catholic, it was the evil will which led a man to set his own opinion against the teaching of the Church - for the Protestant, the malignant blindness which led him to resist the "manifest witness of Scripture," as interpreted by truly Godly men. In Cranmer's proposed Canon Law Code, drawn up in Edward VI's reign, there is a long list of heresies, including "Roman" ones concerning the Papacy and the Mass, and also Lutheran, Anabaptist, Arian, Pelagian and other errors.

A complete machinery was to be set up for the trial and punishment of those who cling to these false beliefs - they were, if they proved obdurate against warning, exhortation and excommunication, to be handed over to the civil authority to be punished: and there can be no doubt (as the historian Maitland has pointed out) that the civil authority was expected to carry out the traditional sentence of death by burning. In this, at least, Cranmer and his associates were in perfect "continuity" with their mediaeval predecessors: the difference was that they had erected a new Royal standard of orthodoxy in place of that of the Holy See. Nor was this intolerance merely theoretical - for Cranmer and other Reformers took part in the condemnation of dissidents who were burnt for their beliefs, both under Henry VIII and Edward VI. The judgment of fire upon Joan Bocher, of Kent, carried out in that reign, was - loudly applauded by the Reformers, even in the midst of their own trials for heresy under Queen Mary.

It is necessary to understand, then, that the cause for which the victims of Mary's persecution suffered had nothing to do with "religious freedom." The apostles of the Reformed versions of Christianity were quite as ready to shed the blood of those whom they held to be wrong as the adherents of the old Religion - and the additional paradox attaches to their attitude, that they had nothing to advance in proof of the iniquity of the views they condemned, except their own private judgment that they were in error. In Cranmer's case, that judgment itself was highly variable at different periods. In 1538 he pronounced condemnation upon a man, John Lambert, on account of disbelief in Transubstantiation: yet long before 1553 he had abandoned that belief himself, and it is set down in his canon law code as a heresy worth of death!

As for Ridley, another of Mary's Martyrs, he never swerved from the belief that "outside the Church there is no salvation." He held it as a Catholic - and later, when he joined his Archbishop in condemning Joan of Kent to the flames, even until the time when he himself perished. He merely changed his views about which religious body was the true Church. Naturally, the Protestants who suffered under the Catholic regime regarded their persecutors as wicked and tyrannical children of Satan: but what they resented was not the State machinery of coercive laws against heresy: it was

the use of that machinery to uphold "idolatry" and the "Roman Antichrist" instead of for the extirpation of falsehood in the name of true religion as they understood it.

The State of Religion in 1553.

Let us glance, now, at the religious counter-revolution which culminated in the tragedy of the Marian persecutions. The accession of Queen Mary had come at the end of a period of successive changes in religion which had produced widespread chaos, both in belief and in social conduct. Even before 1529, when Catholicism had been the accepted faith of Englishmen from the King downward, the ordinary Catholic had been none too well informed about his Faith, and the Divinely appointed role of the one Church of God, as the medium by which Christians gain a hold of Supernatural Truth. Since that date, there had been a veritable spate of novelties preached as "truth" to him with official sanction.

The ancient belief about the Holy See -which had been taken for granted rather than held with zeal - was denounced in a regular campaign of sermons from parish pulpits: customary cults and pieties were discredited and popular heretical literature began to spread widely through the country, even in Henry VIII's time. Such great shrines as that of St. Thomas and Our Lady of Walsingham were violated and pillaged: the monasteries were everywhere destroyed and the religious life treated as contemptible. With only a handful of heroic exceptions, lay leaders and high ecclesiastics not only accepted the doings of "the King's Grace" without protest, but collaborated with them actively, too, when called upon.

Then had followed the reign of Edward VI with its further developments - the bringing in of foreign Reformers and their doctrines, the overthrow of the Mass, the Sacrament of the Altar, and all that remained of Catholic rite and religious custom, and the imposition of two successive English prayer books - all this accompanied by the pillage of churches and by open insults and outrages directed against every kind of traditional sanctity. "Anabaptists" and sectaries of all sorts had been rampant through the land; everything in faith and morals had been called in question, and Government - a prey to the factions of the greedy profiteers of the great spoliation of monasteries and guilds - had been incapable of establishing any firm order in Church or State. Protestants and Catholics alike agree in the account they give of this anarchy in which the work begun by Henry VIII had issued - and Protestants of the official Edwardine school of thought, such as Hooper and Cranmer, deplored it as strongly as conservatives like Gardiner,

What was the state of mind of the "common man" in 1553, at the end of these twenty years of violent changes sponsored by the authorities whom he had been accustomed to follow and revere, and of radical propaganda carried on - almost unchecked - by a small but zealous minority of miscellaneous zealots? That he retained a nostalgic attachment to "the old ways" and the traditional sanctities may be held as certain: it is clear that, even in London and the South-east, where the new idea and beliefs had made most headway, the accession of Mary was welcomed as bringing with it a hope of "governance" and a settlement of Church and State on conservative lines. But how much genuine Catholic Faith and loyalty there was in this conservatism is another matter entirely: and it is easy to be over-optimistic on the subject.

The Rulers of Church and State.

In the ruling classes, cynical materialism and expediency were the order of the day: they could be counted upon to "change their coats" once again, to meet the views of the new Sovereign - they would acquiesce outwardly in her settlement, as they had in those of Henry and Edward, always

provided their gatherings of Church plunder were not placed in jeopardy. That those around her were, for the most part, devoid of real faith in anything, Mary herself knew very well: yet she could not possibly dispense with them, though she knew them secretly contemptuous and hostile towards her and her ideals. They alone had the experience of administration and public affairs necessary for the conduct of Government. Even those who had been actively engaged in Northumberland's conspiracy against her had to be taken back into the Council after a formal submission, to be made the instruments of the Catholic restoration policy.

Among the higher clergy, her support came from people who had, almost to a man, submitted to Henry's Royal Supremacy, and therefore apostatized from the Faith. Most of them had denounced the Papacy at the King's Command; her Chancellor, Bishop Gardiner, had written a learned work of controversy to maintain Henry's cause, with a preface by Bishop Bonner, of London. The Bishops showed, by their conduct in the next reign, that they had well learned their lesson, and were not prepared to subscribe to another abject submission to Royal Supremacy: but, as official maintainers of the Catholic cause, and especially as administrators of the heresy laws, they were in a singularly vulnerable position.

It was open to the heretics who came before them to point out that those who sat as their judges for disloyalty to the Catholic Faith had themselves long taught heresy, and had returned to their allegiance to the Holy See only when the profession of that allegiance became once more safe, and also necessary to the holding of office in the Queen's Church. A number of the accused got in some shrewd blows on these lines, when they were brought before the episcopal courts to answer charges relating to their beliefs.

The Protestant Opposition.

To conduct a policy of full Catholic restoration, under these conditions, was exceedingly difficult - especially against opponents who were active, zealous and determined, and who showed themselves, from the first, to be prepared to stop at nothing in the matter of hostile propaganda and treasonable conspiracy. They did not wait to be attacked before making it clear that they would endure no return of the old Faith, even if it were coupled with toleration. They denounced the Queen in leaflet propaganda, as well as the "hardened and detestable papists" surrounding her throne. Cranmer himself - involved as he already was in the Northumberland plot - published a furious diatribe against the Mass.

Mary, so far as we know, had no personal wish to revive the old laws against heresy; she declared on her accession that she would "force no one to go to Mass," and that the settlement of religion must wait till Parliament met. Meanwhile, those of the Protestant party who wished to leave the country were given every encouragement to do so: and a well organized exodus took place of the clerical leaders and well-to-do. These settled in considerable communities in the Empire and Switzerland, whence they were able to pursue their propaganda warfare, and foment plots and risings, while training a new clerical equipe for the day of happy return which they did not cease to anticipate.

It was clear that the Protestant spirit was irreconcilably militant: as Miss Prescott emphasizes, they did not intend to allow any return, even though it were coupled with toleration, to the old ways of the Church. In dealing with such men as these, even a modern liberal regime would have been forced to measures of repression in order to preserve public order. There was, for instance, the gang who tried to rush the Catholic preacher at St. Paul's Cross, just after the Queen's entry into London,

with shouts of "Kill him! Kill him!" Others disseminated pamphlets advocating the "extermination" of the new Lord Chancellor, Gardiner, before a single Protestant had been touched on the ground of his religion!

Wyatt's Revolt and the Catholic Restoration.

The project of the Spanish marriage of the Queen was generally unpopular, and the plottings of Protestant exiles and their secret friends at home against the Government went on apace. There were schemes to murder the "Pro-Spanish" Councillors, Arundel and Paget, and to dethrone the Queen in favour of her sister, Elizabeth, who was to be married to Courtenay, Earl of Devon. Finally, a vast conspiracy developed, with risings planned to break out simultaneously in Kent, the Midlands and the West. Fortunately for Mary Gardiner got wind of it beforehand; and his move to arrest some of the leaders early in 1554 drove one of the most desperate of them, Sir Thomas Wyatt, to rise six weeks before the time appointed.

There is no need, here, to describe the Wyatt revolt, which was a very serious business indeed, and might well have overturned the throne, but for the incompetence of its leader, and the splendid courage of Queen Mary herself, which aroused an enthusiastic response from the Londoners. It is worth noticing, however, that the Protestant leader Peter Martyr, on the Continent spoke of the "large number of mass-priests" hung up by the rebels, without any expression of disapproval: while John Burcher, writing to him, rejoices openly, stating the number as three hundred.

It would seem, in fact, that the revolting Protestants killed more Catholic clergy in two weeks than the number of Protestants executed by "Bloody" Mary's Government in four years - yet this is never even adverted to in the ordinary textbook accounts of her reign! Once again, I would recall to your minds that when Burcher wrote no Protestant had yet suffered at all for religion - the heresy laws had not been revived, and the National Church had not even been reconciled with the Holy See! His zeal was based purely on a conscientious, bloodthirsty hate for false religion - the very thing attributed to the Queen herself in the anti-Catholic legend.

The conspirators of the previous year had been treated by the Queen with a leniency unexampled in English history - even the young pseudo-queen, Jane Grey, had been spared. This lady and her husband were now put to death - a horrible deed, since, even if technically guilty of treason, they were mere children, and, as the Queen well knew, tools in the hands of others. "Reasons of State" cannot excuse this evil deed - though it was typical of the time. But the other eminent persons who suffered well deserved their fate, and of lesser folk convicted and condemned, the Queen pardoned four hundred - the overwhelming majority. Even after this second provocation, in fact, her mercy is in striking contrast with the savage methods used by Henry VIII, Edward VI's Council and Elizabeth I in dealing with rebellion.

The Protestants themselves, however, had done everything they could to make toleration impossible, whatever the original ideas of the Queen may have been. It was, in any case, utterly alien to the thought of the time, which held it to be the duty of Christian princes to repress religious error as the gravest of public evils.

Catholicism Restored.

The next stage of restoration was a repeal of the whole of the anti-Papal legislation since 1529, wiping out the whole structure of Henry VIII's religious revolution - so far as the legal situation was concerned; and making England "officially Catholic" once more. In the episcopate of the restored

Church, however, almost all had "bowed the knee to Baal" at some time in their lives: and half of them had originally been made Bishops by grace or Baal - i.e., of Henry VIII, as Supreme Head of the English Church. The position of these was legalized from the Catholic standpoint, while other men of a new, non-bureaucratic type were placed in the vacant sees: and under the guidance of Cardinal Pole - a saintly Archbishop free of the taint of the Henrician apostasy - plans were drawn up for a thorough reform of ecclesiastical education, and for the remedy of long-standing abuses of the old Church.

It is worth noticing, incidentally, that the Henrician and later Protestant settlements contributed nothing whatever to alter these evils of the late mediaeval system, and that there was no proper system for training Anglican clergy until the nineteenth century! There were episcopal visitations, also, for the restoration and ordering of parish worship, which had fallen into a shocking state in the course of the last reign. Had the Queen lived a decade longer, this beginning of a positive programme might have borne fruits, and such works as the new manuals of Christian Doctrine, published by Bishop Bonner, of London, and Bishop Watson, of Lincoln might have contributed to the formation of an instructed Catholicism among the neglected laity. Even in the brief period allotted to Pole's reform movement, there was generated a new spirit which was to appear in the Catholic exiles of the next reign, as well as in the resistance of many others who remained at home.

The Persecution - Whose Responsibility?

Our concern, however, is with the measures now taken to "restore order" by dealing with heretics. The statutes which were used for this purpose were not of the Government's own framing - they were those originally enacted against the Lollards in the early Lancastrian period, which had remained in force until the end of Henry VIII's reign. Their repeal in 1547 had not prevented burnings under Edward VI, since it was still open to the Government to impose the death-sentence upon a heretic convicted in an ecclesiastical court; and, in fact, Cranmer and his associates had doomed Joan Bocher to the flames in 1550, and the Dutch Anabaptist, Van Parris, in 1551. But their restoration early in 1555 was a sign that the Catholic Government intended to take action to enforce orthodoxy: and early in the same year came the first burning, that of John Rogers, a former priest.

The question of who initiated the policy of formal religious persecution under the Lollardy code - which contrasts with the pseudopolitical attack on Catholicism in subsequent reigns under a completely new code of legislation - is one which remains undecided. There is no reason to believe that it was the Queen's idea - though she accepted the advice of the Council, in this, as in other questions. Her personal view is extant in a message written in her own hand:-

"Touching punishment of heretics. me thinketh it ought to be done without rashness, not leaving in the meanwhile to do justice to such as by learning would seem to deceive the simple: and the rest so to be used, that the people might well perceive them not to be condemned without just occasion, whereby they shall both understand the truth, and beware to do the like: and especially within London, I would wish none to be burnt without some of the Council's presence, and both here and there good sermons at the same."

In his History of English Law, Reeves points out that the policy was adopted by the Crown with the authority of Parliament and the assent of the Council, composed chiefly of laymen. "It was the result," he says, "not of the religious bigotry of ecclesiastics, but of the worst and vilest statecraft." Far from being instigated by fanatical and bloody-minded Catholic clerics - as the legend has it - there is ample evidence that it was disliked and discouraged by the Bishops. Bonner - "Bloody

Bonner, of London," in the Protestant myth - was rebuked in a Royal letter for slackness: and both he and Chancellor Gardiner - the chief objects of Foxe's vilification - made it clear that they had no responsibility for the legislation which their office obliged them to enforce.

"It was not my doing," declares Gardiner (in answer to Bradford's protest that "Christ used not this way to bring men to faith"), "although some there be that think this to be the best way: for I, for my part have been challenged for being too gentle sometimes." On another occasion, Bonner points out to Philpot, former Archdeacon of Winchester, that he was not the cause of his arrest. "I marvel that men should trouble me with these matters: but I must be obedient to my betters," he went on "and I wish men speak otherwise of me than I deserve." The attitude of both is somewhat like that of a modern judge who dislikes the death sentence, but who is obliged by the state of the law to pronounce it in certain cases. The men who slandered them, however, were no more interested in truth than the modern Communist propagandists who vilify Eisenhower or Adenauer. John Bale described Gardiner as the "common cut-throat of England" in 1553, when there was no sign of the repression of heretics. In the same writing he and Bonner are described as "merciless persecutors of Christ's flock" and "pimps of Antichrist."

This is simply the jargon of current "militant" propaganda - as "Fascist beasts," "war-mongers," etc., are that of the Red press today. A further indication of Gardiner's attitude is that he furnished Peter Martyr with funds to leave England, and shielded Edward VI's former secretary, one Thomas Smith from persecution and gave him a yearly pension of £100, while Roger Ascham, the tutor of Lady Jane Grey, pays an enthusiastic tribute to the Chancellor for his humanity and benevolence.

For the rest, the Cardinal Legate Pole was opposed to the policy, and the confessor of King Philip, Mary's husband, Friar de Castro, actually denounced the persecution in a sermon before the Court. It was also opposed by the King's father, the Emperor, and the Imperial envoy, Renard.

The fashion in which the machinery against heresy was worked provides further evidence that the force behind it was the will of the State, not that of the Church authorities. In earlier heresy proceedings, the State had come in only at the end, as "hangman to the Pope," to use Tyndale's pithy phrase. But in the cases described by Foxe in the years 1555-8, the rounding up of heretics is the task of the Justices of the Peace, who are spurred on by Royal proclamations like that of February, 1551, in which heresy is linked with false rumours and the dissemination of seditious literature.

It is these authorities, too, who inquire into such things as non-attendance at Mass and Communion, blasphemous acts and utterances, and so forth. This being the case, it is easy to see why wealthy heretical gentry and noblemen went unmolested through the Queen's reign. Those brought before the Courts were largely simple souls of the poorer classes, with more fervour than knowledge - frequently odd and intolerant: and exasperating, no doubt, to the authorities by their disorderly conduct - but, of all the opponents of the Government, surely the last who could be truly described as "dangerous."

The Infamy of the Marian Persecution.

Whether looked at from the point of view of policy or that of morals, the Marian persecutions stand utterly condemned. From the standpoint of expediency, they were simply inept, since they did nothing to weaken the powerful forces of opposition. They did not touch the rich men who had been the main stay of the earlier attack on the old Religion, and were to join the next ruler in overthrowing it once more. They could not deal with the organized Protestant communities in exile, who were out of the Government's reach; or prevent them from continuing their hostile propaganda

and laying their plans for a "come back." They were, in fact, completely useless, as well as detestable on Christian principles.

If we look at the persecution from the legal and moral standpoint, it was simply monstrous. As we have seen, it was a generally accepted principle among Catholics of the time that "heretics" who had apostatized from the Faith were not merely morally guilty but socially dangerous, and as such to be proceeded against by law in properly-run Christian countries. But the England of Mary was not a normal Catholic country like the England of Henry IV, dealing with a small body of religious perverts with revolutionary tendencies. It was a country which had been en bloc outside the Catholic Communion for a good twenty years - its King and bishops, church and State authorities all excommunicate, and committed to heresy to a larger or less extent. The protests against this state of affairs had long died away into silence: it had been accepted by practically everyone of importance, as well as acquiesced in by the mass of the people.

A very large number of those who came before the Bishops' Courts were men and women who could not seriously be regarded as having swerved obstinately away from the faith of the Catholic Church in which they had been reared. They were not, therefore "heretics" within the meaning of Canon Law. England had formally ceased to be Catholic in 1534-35: so that people of thirty or so had lived under an anti-Catholic regime since they were ten - far too early to be held responsible for their beliefs. In that time, they had been exposed to a constant barrage of propaganda against the Holy See and the idea of the Church as it had hitherto been held in England. The very Bishops who sat in judgment upon them had set the example of denying their Faith at the command of the Sovereign. In effect, they had been reared in heresy, if not in the Protestantism they had finally accepted - and it was absurd, as well as iniquitous, to treat them as bad Catholics who had left the Church.

This difficulty was got over by the legal falsification which treated England as having been a "Catholic" country until the Mass was officially overthrown and the traditional priesthood and way of worship abolished. For the purposes of the Marian courts of justice, in fact, Henry VIII had lived and died a Catholic! This minimized the apostasy of the Marian Bishops and clergy, to be sure, since they had refused to accept the "Sacramentarian" heresies of Edward VI's time. But the decision to choose between the heresies and apostasies which "really counted" and those which could be ignored was one which itself smacked of heresy, however convenient it might be as a "race-saving" device.

Of the "martyrs" named by Foxe, he gives the age of 52 only, of his total of 278. Of these, only 14 were born before 1520, and therefore of mature age before the Henrician apostasy. Of the other 38, 27 attained their fourteenth birthday between 1534 and 1546, while nine others came to that age in Edward VI's reign - so that even on the Bishops' reckoning, they should not have been treated as "heretics" in the true sense. In fact, all were burnt, and the question - obviously a vital one - was never raised at all!

Yet another interesting point about these trials appears if their procedure is compared with that laid down in Papal legislation on heresy courts - for instance, that of the much abused Inquisition. This provides most carefully for honest and competent advocates to defend the accused - but, in Foxe's work, there is nowhere any mention of a defending advocate at all! To be sure, this is not conclusive, since Foxe is chiefly concerned to show his heroes grappling with their persecutors on questions of doctrine. But it seems very doubtful indeed whether the accused had legal advice; certainly, it was

not usually permitted in the Courts of the High Commission in Queen Elizabeth I's time, which judged ecclesiastical cases.

To sum up - it was infamous that peasants and workpeople of little education, brought up in an atmosphere of doctrinal confusion and official hostility towards the Catholic Church, should be dealt with as "formal heretics" on account of their new beliefs, by ecclesiastical judges whose weakness and apostasy had contributed to the downfall of the Church.

The Position of the Bishops.

The first of the Protestants burned, John Rogers, declared bluntly that "changing religion with the Government" was a vice characteristic of the conservatives who opposed the new German doctrines to which he adhered. "The papists at all times," he said, "were most ready to apply themselves to the present world, and like men - pleasers, to follow the fantasies of those in authority, and turn with the State, which way soever it turned"; and he proceeded to describe the movement of these "weathercocks," under Henry, Edward and Mary, in terms which must have made many faces red. When examined by a distinguished commission of lay lords and Bishops - including Tunstall, Heath, Thirlby and Gardiner - he declared that he had learned his "wicked doctrines" touching the Papacy from "ye yourselves, all the Bishops of the realm, when I was a young man twenty years past. Saunders was able to justify his belief about the Pope's usurpation, in answer to Gardiner, by referring to the Bishop - Chancellor's own book - which had lately been republished, in a Protestant edition, with a savage preface by Bale.

There was nothing that the Bishops could answer except "we have fallen in manner all: but now be risen again and returned to the Catholic Church. You must rise again with us, and come home unto it." In answering William Tims, Bishop Bonner went on to confess that Gardiner had written his book, and he himself the preface, "because of the perilous world that then was"; they had simply not had the courage to face death for the Pope's authority. The scandal of the past could not be exorcized - the ghost of Henry VIII hovered over the trials conducted by Bishops who had once been his obedient and submissive tools in his war against the Church.

Foxe and the Martyrs.

Practically all that we know of the details of the Marian persecution is derived from John Foxe, whose account was written simply as a mighty piece of anti-Catholic propaganda, with a view to serving the cause of Protestantism. The dreadful history of the Marian terror was to be burned into the minds of Englishmen, so that they might never again regard the Old Religion except with hate and fear. At the same time, the new religion was provided with a "Golden Legend" to take the place of the older traditional lives of the Saints - filled, like them, with fantastic wonders and horrors. It is written vividly and with fierce passion - the Catholics are all monsters, the Bishops' names are all adorned with the navy's adjective, "Bloody": their victims are "poor, meek, innocent lambs" - though their speech and conduct, for the most part, recall the zealots of primitive Islam rather than anything else.

They are filled with an old Testament fervour against Amalekites, idolators, and children of Belial, which contrasts strangely with the Christian precepts of love towards those who hate and persecute the people of God. These men and women met their death with a splendid courage, however, which compels admiration: and, with all their terrible violence, there is something uplifting about their simple sincerity in maintaining their convictions. They are largely of the working class, or that just above it; they have a burning zeal for the Scriptures, and a great familiarity with its English text and

dexterity in assembling its passages for their own purposes: and they are firmly convinced that they are "taught of God," and that it is their right and duty to denounce His enemies and uproot and destroy all that is not in conformity with their reading of the Holy Book.

To themselves, they were Scriptural figures, living out their lives as a continuation of the sacred story. No arguments can stir their iron certitude - the patient striving and reasoning of Bishops reluctant to condemn, earnest to convince, is of no avail. Clerics with their record of time-serving and cowardice were not the There were 51 women - only one being a "gentlewoman": these, though of the lower orders, yield to none in courage and argumentative zest - two had fathers and mothers who had perished in the flames, one was blind. The executions were usually carried out in the cathedral city of the Bishop who conducted the trial, or in the country town: but there were a number elsewhere, especially where the sheriffs wished to intimidate people in places which were strongholds of dissidence. Most of those burned in London came from outside the city. In the part of England north of Chester and Derby, there were no burnings at all.

The Effect on Public Opinion.

It is frequently said that the persecution of Protestants contributed notably to the unpopularity of Mary's Government, by the "memory and disgust" which it left behind. It would be pleasant to believe that the English reacted in this way to barbarities committed in the name of religion: but unfortunately there is too much reason to hold that this is simply "wishful thinking," and there is nothing in the way of contemporary evidence. The popular idea which identifies Marian Catholicism with religious cruelty in a special manner, and regards her Government's burning of heretics with peculiar horror, is of later date than Mary's own reign: it arose from the popularizing of the acts of the martyrs in Foxe's version.

The modern humanitarian spirit was almost non-existent at this time - it was certainly not present among the Protestant zealots who publicized the heroism and sufferings of their brethren: while, as for the general body of the English, it is not likely that they were especially upset about the infliction of capital punishment in this form upon a few hundred people spread over various parts of the country. All through the sixteenth and the two following centuries, the criminal law was exceedingly savage, and until 1826 death sentences were carried out publicly for "felonies" which might be quite trivial. As Philip Hughes points out in his *History of the Reformation in England*: "If we were habituated to the spectacle of something like 12,000 executions yearly - where now there are not a dozen - for offences which varied from stealing five shillings to murder and treason, we should hardly be as impressed as we assume our ancestors to have been, by the fact of an additional number - comparatively small - now executed annually, for the crime called heresy."

It is worth remembering, too, that the population was inured to many other brutalities - not only to "blood-sports" like bear baiting and bull baiting, but to the sight of men and women flogged through the streets, sometimes for nothing more than begging. Nor was death at the stake a penalty confined to heretics - it was inflicted in the case of women guilty of husband-murder or that of a master or mistress, or of coining, being regarded as more "decent" than that of being hanged and publicly disembowelled, which was inflicted upon the male sex for certain felonies. The last case of a woman convict being burnt in England was as late as 1789 - within thirty years of the birth of Queen Victoria - though by that time it was usual to strangle the victim before burning.

No sooner had the Catholic Government ceased to put Protestants to death for heresy, than the Reformed Christians who succeeded it in power gave themselves to the horrid business of hunting

down witches. The legal establishment of this superstition went hand in hand with the 1559 settlement, and Protestant Marian exiles took a principal part in it. The martyrologist, Foxe, was largely responsible for spreading the horrid notions from which sprang frightful cruelties through the rest of this and the next centuries - barbarities especially associated with the more extreme forms of Protestantism.

In Scotland, where Calvinism was dominant, some eight thousand "witches" were burnt between 1560 and 1600, in a country with a total population of a million at most; the number hanged in England is unknown: but it is declared by those who have studied the subject to be certainly "enormous." In comparison with these forgotten innocent victims, the number of heretics killed under Mary is a mere handful. And to all this, we must add that the killing of people for religion, under a new penal code which made Catholic priesthood and the saying of Mass "treason," went on until the time of Charles II, though it was sometimes covered by "political" accusations of a type resembling those brought against Christian victims "behind the Iron Curtain."

It is shocking to think that long centuries of Catholic Christianity had had so little effect in diminishing "man's inhumanity to man," and the fact that the Reformed religion proved no more successful is not a matter for satisfaction - but merely for sad admission. To the shame of both, it must be said that the extension of the spirit of judicial mercy and humanity which ought to have been a mark of the ages of Faith, has in fact taken place in a time of growing unbelief, even though it can be traced clearly enough to the humanizing influence of Christian teachings concerning man's value and dignity and love of neighbour.

Why the Catholic Restoration Failed.

It is necessary to repeat, however, that in trying to set the Marian persecutions in their proper historical setting, I have no notion of excusing or justifying them. The estimation of public feeling about them, is a question of fact which must be considered objectively -and, when it is so considered, it seems clear that this factor had no perceptible part in the failure of the Catholic restoration. The principal causes of that failure are clear enough. England had ceased to be a "Catholic country" at the time of the Queen's accession, if we mean by this term a country in which the average man takes the truth of the Faith for granted, as well as the Church's right to obedience. The great majority, no doubt, were "Catholic at heart" in the sense of being attached to their ancestral traditions and glad to see them restored: but the mass of the people was certainly not pro-Papalany more than it was pro-Protestant: and its "Catholic" feeling was not sufficient to inspire militant resistance, or even strong protest, at the first moves towards the restoration of the Edwardine religious regime.

In these circumstances, the task of a true Catholic restoration needed, above all, time and positive evangelical action on the part of the Church, supported by intelligent Government policy in the handling of the religious problem. The policy of the State was one of the stupidest reaction - including the revival of a repressive legislation which had been designed for an altogether different situation, and which did not touch the source of the anti-Catholic menace. The Church, while still suffering from the dead hand of State domination, and over-burdened with the episcopal and clerical "collaborators" of yesterday, did make plans for a solid work of re-instruction and re-evangelization: but they were plans which, even with far greater apostolic zeal, would have taken time to ripen.

In ten to twenty years, the official Catholic restoration would probably have become fully effective among the masses, so as to stand firm against the threat of a new religious revolution: but Queen Mary died only four years after the formal reconciliation of England with the ancient Faith: and the Queen who followed her was thoroughly committed to the anti-Catholic cause by her birth, character and upbringing. In such circumstances, nothing but a miracle could have saved the passive, semi-Catholic mass from slipping, by way of acquiescence, into ultimate acceptance of the new religious order.

But if the issue was not affected by the policy of Mary's Government towards heretics, that policy, which was scandalously unjust as well as inept, gave plenty of material which could be, and was, exploited in order to build up a "black legend" of anti-Catholicism whose huge remains are still an obstacle to the return of the English-speaking people to the Faith of their ancestors. The burnings, indeed, are unforgettable - and should not be forgotten: but the chief guilt of them should not be ascribed to a Catholic Queen, who was herself the most merciful as well as the most brave and unhappy of women: and, if we are to be just, we must attribute the wretched business far more to sheer bureaucratic stupidity than to fanaticism or bloodthirstiness on the part of those concerned.