WALLACE MACCAFFREY

The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime

Elizabethan Politics, 1558-1572

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Wallace MacCaffrey

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All the portraits except that of William Herbert appear here through the courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London; the portrait of Herbert appears with the kind permission of the Earl of Pembroke, Wilton House.

William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, 1501(?)-1570

Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 1515-1571

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1532(?)-1588

Edward Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, 1512-1585

Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, 1526(?)-1583

ABBREVIATIONS

APC	*Acts of the Privy Council of England*, 32 v., edited by J. R. Dasent (London, 1890-1907).
BM	British Museum
CPR	*Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the P. R. O., Philip and Mary, Elizabeth, 1553-1572*, 9 v. (London, 1937-1966).
CSPDom	*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1547-1625*, 12 v., edited by Robert Lemon and M. A. E. Green (London, 1856-1872).
CSPFor	*Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth*, 23 v., edited by Joseph Stevenson *et al.* (London, 1863-1950).
CSPRome	*Calendar of State Papers, Rome*, 2 v., edited by J. M. Rigg (London, 1916-1926).
CSPScot	*Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, 11 v. (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1898-1936).
CSPSpan	*Calendar of State Papers, Spanish, Elizabeth*, 4 v., edited by M. A. S. Hume (London, 1892-1899).
CSPVen	*Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, 9 v., edited by Rowden Brown *et al.* (London, 1864-1898).
Digges	*The Compleat Ambassador*, edited by Sir Dudley Digges (London, 1655).
Fénélon	*Correspondance Diplomatique de la Mothe-Fénélon*, 7 v., edited by A. Teulet (Paris and London, 1840).
Hardwicke	*Miscellaneous State Papers from 1501 to 1726*, 2 v. (London, 1778).
Hatfield	Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Salisbury Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, Part I (London, 1883).

Haynes, Murdin	*Collection of State Papers . . . Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, 2 v., edited by Samuel Haynes and William Murdin (London, 1740-1759). Cited as Haynes for v. 1 and Murdin for v. II.
PRO	Public Record Office
ST	*A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason*, 42 v., edited by William Cobbett *et al.* (London, 1816-1898).

PART I
THE NEW REGIME

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE TO A REIGN

FEW PERIODS in English history have attracted so much serious attention as the reign of Elizabeth I. Since the time of the great Froude a sequence of major historians have devoted their life's work to this age. In earlier generations Froude, Cheyney, and Pollard worked on the grand scale, taking the whole course of national history as their subject. More recently their successors have turned their attention to specific men and to particular aspects of the era. Conyers Read's major biographical studies of Walsingham and of Cecil have illuminated the careers of Elizabeth's two greatest servants. Neale's work on Parliament has given new shape to our understanding of that institution and of the Elizabethan age. More recently still a group of able historians have concentrated their efforts on the institutions of government, on the lesser political figures, and on the religious changes of these years and on their social and economic history. Consequently, a word of explanation is needed to justify yet another stirring of soil so well cultivated.

The primary purpose of this book is to examine the

fifteen years which lie between Elizabeth's accession to the throne and the death of the Duke of Norfolk in 1572. This was the testing-time of the regime—whether it was to live or to die. For contemporaries they were years of hope and despair, always shadowed by agonized uncertainties about the morrow. By 1572 the question of survival had been settled and the very struggle for survival had molded the regime into a form which would endure almost as long as Queen Elizabeth lived.

The study of these years requires a dual perspective. From the shorter-term point of view of the sixteenth century they mark the last stage of a forty-year crisis which at times had threatened the very existence of basic political order in the English state. They brought to a close the alarming political disturbances attendant upon the English Reformation and, in a generation when much of Europe suffered from the terrible scourge of religious civil war, Englishmen were to enjoy domestic peace and general good order. This was no mean achievement; but it was one by no means in the cards when Elizabeth assumed power: the events through which a political stability lacking since the early decades of Henry VIII's reign was restored deserve careful attention and some reconsideration.

From the longer perspective of four centuries these years mark a fundamental turning-point in the history of English politics. Slowly and awkwardly England was turning away from the now archaic world of late medieval times, from a political universe paternalistic and dynastic in outlook, and since the 1470's very much royally-centered. In the era now beginning the magnetic pole of politics would not quite coincide with that visible and apparent center of attraction, the throne, and as a conse-

quence the very nature of political activity would change. By the early 1570's there existed in England a hybrid political order, viable but fragile, accommodating in uneasy partnership a still potent monarchy and an as yet ill-defined political elite. The first hesitating experiments in a new politics were being made at this time, in which the initiatives to action came not solely from the sovereign but also from partisan aristocratic groupings, linked loosely but effectively by the common ideology of Protestantism. It was the first painful stage of a process lasting over more than a century by which the power of the Crown would be gradually reduced and that of the aristocratic classes, especially the gentry, steadily augmented.

The mode in which this study is cast is one of compressed narrative, but the prime concern is not to rehearse once more the well-known events of these years so much as to understand their significance in the course of English political life. In the past these years have, perhaps unconsciously, often been regarded as a kind of prelude to the later triumphs of the Elizabethans. Posterity has been loud in its applause of those successes and it has sometimes seemed as though they were predetermined, imprinted in the very fabric of history, and, in some sense, self-explanatory. But to understand the Elizabethan achievement it is signally important to remember that the regime, during its first decade and a half, seemed to contemporaries to be a very fragile creation with a very precarious future. These men led lives conditioned by frightening and incalculable incertitudes. To them the sudden death of the Queen, a ruinous marriage with Robert Dudley, privy conspiracy in favor of Mary Stuart, or even foreign invasion, formed the all-too-probable shape of the

future. The worst of these fears were not realized, but their very existence is a vital fact of politics in these years. It is all the more important to forego the delusive advantage given by four centuries of hindsight and to keep steadily before us the anxious forebodings with which contemporaries faced the grim uncertainties of these first Elizabethan years.

What was the outlook when Elizabeth succeeded her sister in November 1558? At the moment of accession there was both relief and rejoicing. Mary Tudor had died after an illness of some months. For the third time in less than a dozen years there was a change of sovereigns in England. In the sixteenth century such a change was at best an unsettling experience for the nation. In this case Mary's long illness had given warning of impending change, but the conventions of monarchy precluded any public preparation. Hence there was an air of crisis, an atmosphere of mingled apprehension and expectancy. Many feared disturbance, but at the center of government the Council methodically took the usual measure attendant upon a royal death—the closing of the ports, alerting of garrisons, and other cautionary moves.

Thus the shock of Mary's death, when it came, was easily met; the new Queen was proclaimed without incident and amid rejoicing that seems to have been more than merely conventional excitement; the shift of power to the new sovereign was swiftly achieved. Awkward and urgent problems had to be faced without delay. The country was still at war with France although active hostilities had ceased some months earlier. For weeks English commissioners in Flanders had been engaged in the painful task of negotiating a peace with France which could at

the best be but a face-saving operation. The crushing defeat of the previous January had left England without a continental base, with negligible military resources, and, indeed, without much will to continue the struggle. A little less urgent but more deeply troubling was the great question of religion. All England and half of Europe waited with nervous expectancy for the new Queen's first moves in this all-important matter. Yet, for the moment, in the jubilance of her peaceful accession Queen and subjects could pause to catch their breath.

During the years immediately ahead—between 1558 and 1572—England was to pass through the last phase of a grave political disturbance which had begun thirty years earlier with Henry VIII's "great matter," the divorce from Catherine of Aragon. The original problem, difficult enough in itself, had soon snowballed into one of the major transformations of English history, with consequences, both religious and political, which reached far beyond the end of the sixteenth century. The first phase of this disturbance—up to about 1540—was largely one of institutional change. Under the ruthlessly efficient management of Thomas Cromwell the links with Rome were quickly snapped, a new national ecclesiastical establishment set up, and—a by-product—the monasteries swept away and their wealth scooped into the royal coffers. Except for the lonely resistance of More, Fisher, and the Carthusians and the confused and ineffective protest of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the new order met no obstacles of any note.

Perhaps the ease of this first transition obscured the difficulties which lay ahead. Henry had hoped for a limited revolution, carefully restricted to jurisdictional and constitutional changes, untainted by any hint of religious

heterodoxy. But unluckily for the king his rupture with Rome coincided with one of the great revolutions in Westtern Christian history. However much his servants might labor to draw distinctions between Henrician orthodoxy and Lutheran heresy, the flood of history was too much for them. The waters of the Reformation were about to overflow England and the king by his actions in the 1530's had unwillingly and unwittingly opened the dikes.

Even the reluctant Henry, at the end of his life, began to sense that the break with Rome could not be confined to merely institutional changes but necessarily brought in its train a whole new religious order. Before his death there was the nucleus of a Protestant party in the realm and under his successor the circumstances of a minority gave them the freest possible scope to realize their hopes. The resistance of the religious conservatives was no more effective now than in the thirties; the obstacles in the Protestants' path lay in their own uncertainties as to what new forms of worship should replace the now prohibited mass and on what doctrinal bases they should rest. The English Reformation threw up no Calvin or Knox to give focus or offer guidance to a new religion. When Edward's death in 1553 halted the development of English Protestantism in mid-career, there was little agreement among its adherents except in their wholehearted anti-Catholicism, i.e., their rejection of Rome's jurisdiction and of the Roman sacramental system. English Protestantism was not to find its focal point in a charismatic leader, in a confession of faith, or in a system of church government. Its own individual character had yet to crystallize.

But the problems raised by the second stage of the long crisis lay not solely in the choice of a new national form

of Christianity; they had larger dimensions still. These middle decades of the sixteenth century saw a profound transformation in the whole nature of English politics. The previous century had been one of open and violent disorder, in which brute force was repeatedly the final arbiter in the national political life. The revulsion against those unhappy times was deep and long-lasting, and a vivid memory of the War of the Roses was an important element in Elizabethan attitudes. Monarchical leadership, more or less in abeyance since the fourteenth century, was reasserted with great vigor by the Yorkist and then by the Tudor kings. From the late 1490's down to the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536-1537 England enjoyed a long generation of civil peace. The official political doctrine of the Tudors naturally reflected these facts. The old formulas of divine-right monarchy were given revived cogency even before their vigorous use in royal defiance of divine-right Papacy. The alternative tradition of English medieval political thought—that the king was subordinate to God and the law—receded into the background. Now it was the monarch's divine lieutenancy which was constantly being emphasized, in a simple and already rather archaic doctrine of right political order. This doctrine envisaged a ruler hallowed by divine sanction and sustained by the facts of nature and history alike, who displayed an authoritarian but paternal solicitude for his people and whose task was to insure their welfare and secure their best advantage. His subjects, on their side, had the simple obligation of unquestioning obedience to God's nominee.

Such a theory of right order sharply trammeled political activity. The ordinary competition for place or

power was to be kept within limits laid down by the king; disagreement or criticism were by logic excluded. A ruler chosen from on high was supremely competent to make all decisions affecting his people and in such an organic view of society the notion of competing private or partisan thought or action was entirely abhorrent. Under the first two Tudors the theory and practice of politics were not far separated. These masterful kings monopolized to themselves all the great political decisions of the realm, leaving to their ministers—even a Wolsey or a Cromwell—the mere execution of royal commands. Seeking a maximum freedom of action, the first two Tudors had made royal service a career open to the talents and had recruited widely from the middle and upper middle ranks of society. However, they by no means excluded the greater aristocrats from their service and in their court there was a mingling of new aristocrats of the robe and old ones of the sword. But only a very few were admitted to assist in the highest mysteries of state—in the making of policy and the issuance of commands. To enter the royal service was to embrace the career of a bureaucrat not of a politician.

In this restricted political universe the course of the English Reformation produced explosive effects. First of all there was the irony of chance circumstance which, at the very crisis of religious revolution, placed on the throne first a child and then a woman of great personal courage but limited political acumen. Such circumstances would in any event have seriously disordered a political world so pivoted on the monarch, but these seasonal storms were warnings of long-term changes in the whole climate of English politics.

In the first and most obvious instance the Reformation altered English politics by fostering faction. Over the previous half-century the power of the monarchy had pretty effectively extinguished the dynastic or semi-feudal factionalisms of the past; now the realm was threatened by internal disunity of a more serious and far more dangerous kind. Even before the death of Henry the nuclei of two opposing religious parties were forming in the court, and in the years after 1547 England was governed successively by two rancorously partisan regimes, Protestant under Edward, and Catholic under Mary. Each of these sovereigns thus became the leader of a religious faction, and the Crown's neutrality towards the major religious issues of the Reformation, which Henry with some success had struggled to maintain, was irretrievably lost. Elizabeth was left with no choice but to assume a partisan position at her accession. The question now was whether or not the Catholic party, left leaderless by Mary's death, could recover itself for a return bout to recapture power. To contemporaries this seemed likely enough, and fear of this possibility haunted Elizabethan ministers in the first decade of the new reign; the Catholic political failure is one of the themes dealt with in this book.

The triumph of the Protestant faction settled, at least for the present, the religious complexion of the nation, but implicit in it was a series of alterations in the nature of English politics, novel, bewildering, and far-reaching. Even before Elizabeth's accession the intrusion of religious ideology into politics was introducing a perplexing confusion into the affairs of the English monarchy. In 1539 Parliament had, at Henry's irritable bidding, passed a bill hopefully entitled "An act abolishing diversity

in opinions." It was an unavailing attempt to restore, under royal leadership, the kind of uniformity of faith which had hitherto been everywhere the norm of European life. But this particular Humpty Dumpty was not to be set up again in England although the efforts of all the king's horses and all the king's men would continue to be engaged at the task. More important still, royal control over the delicate process of religious change, so boldly assumed in the 1530's, was, after 1547, fatally loosened. Initiative towards change had now shifted to a group of subjects; henceforward there was to be a constant tug between a Crown desperately struggling to retain religious uniformity under royal auspices and a forward party of Protestants straining and pulling to reshape the national religion according to their own strongly held convictions.

The very existence of such private initiative outside the control of the Crown was of course incompatible with patriarchal, divine-right monarchy. If England had remained under a Catholic monarch, the situation would no doubt have led to civil conflict and a developed theory of justified resistance to constituted authority, as in France. Given instead a Protestant, and popular sovereign, there emerged a far more complex process—first, a rumbling discontent, erupting from time to time in real but inconclusive contests of will between the Queen and the Protestant leadership; then, in the long run of three generations, a dangerous divergence between the monarch and a leading segment of his subjects.

The mere existence of a center of initiative and action independent of the Crown was grave enough. But of even greater note was its ideological character. The old factionalism of the past had been personal, familial, or dy-

nastic in nature. The cement which held together this new grouping was ideology. Commitment to abstract principles of belief which were also a program for action was, at least for laymen, something bewilderingly novel in the sixteenth century. But it was, as they were quick to discover, infinitely useful.

The use of the term "ideology" in this context requires explication.[1] English Protestantism in the mid-sixteenth century was not governed by a tightly knit and coherent body of doctrine. The most conspicuous features of its thought were not so much a body of positive assertions as its wholehearted rejection of an outmoded and now despised system of belief. For most first-generation Protestants this meant a repudiation of "idolatry," of obscurantism and mystery, and the liberating excitement of new knowledge, of a new enlightenment, and a new freedom of intellectual movement. For some this experience was a highly private one, a spiritual conversion; they were indeed Pauline "new men." But to many other Englishmen the new faith signified a more public and external reformation, the reordering of public life on principles of a robust laicism. For those who sat at Calvin's feet in Geneva the new faith implied a very explicit and very radical doctrine. Few, even among the exiles, shared the intensity of vision which moved a Knox or a Goodman, but it is important to grasp that even such a wary trimmer as William Cecil or a political adventurer like Nicholas Throckmorton shared the vision of an enlightened Protestant

[1] For interesting discussion of this problem see A. Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, N.C., 1965) and Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966).

polity and were no less contemptuous in their dismissal of an obscurantist Catholicism. They were prepared to compromise under Mary, but once they held power under a Protestant sovereign there was no turning back for them. In their eyes a Protestant polity was a *sine qua non* for England's future.

An additional element in English Protestant ideology was its passionate nationalism—or, perhaps more accurately, its xenophobia. The roots of this feeling were ancient; its recent manifestations had preceded the Reformation, but it fused quickly and easily with a cause which began by repudiating external authority. Not until the 1560's would Foxe's great work bring together in a full-blown mythology these nationalist and religious strains.[2] But even earlier these feelings were given new shape as Protestant England stood alone against its continental, Catholic, neighbors. Anti-foreign and anti-Catholic sentiment blended, and the process was hastened by Mary's unpopular Spanish marriage and the consequent threat that England would become no more than a minor planet in a Hapsburg solar system.

This diffuse but potent ideology had another important characteristic. It gave a vital new urgency and an unprecedented self-consciousness to men's concerns with public issues; it became a focus for organizing their views in these matters and thus served the purposes of a modern party platform. In Mary's reign it provided a center for the agitation against her policies, domestic and foreign; after Elizabeth's accession it was a rallying point for the Commons in their triumphant effort to establish the radically

[2] See William Haller, *The Elect Nation* (New York, 1963).

Protestant Edwardian liturgy. In the next decade it would be a guide to the Protestant leaders in their relentless efforts to influence the Queen on the succession, on her marriage, on the treatment of the Catholics, and on foreign policy. In short, as the new ideology came to permeate a large segment of the aristocratic classes throughout the country, it would form the matrix for a loose but potent body of public opinion on high matters of state. Such an ideology, religious in terminology and concept, but political in application and goals, proved extraordinarily serviceable to the needs of the age.

In these decades there did not, of course, exist any formal party structure or, indeed, any continuity of organization. Ephemeral forms arose as need or circumstance dictated—the cooperation of agitators in Mary's and, later, in Elizabeth's Parliaments; the associations of exiles in Germany and Switzerland under Mary; the alliance in Council grouped around Cecil; or the rival, and more broadly based left-wing Protestant faction led by Leicester. Ultimately there would appear the politically sophisticated and well-organized Puritan movement of the 1570's and 1580's.

From the point of view of a traditional monarchy, based on the patriarchal leadership of God's elect, all this was highly uncomfortable. It meant that there now existed a focus of political belief and of action which was not directly derived from the monarchy and—more significant still—a standard of belief by which the monarchy could in fact be judged. John Knox's ill-timed attack on the Marian monarchy and Christopher Goodman's even more dangerous pamphlet, published at the same time, were a warning. At the moment of Elizabeth's

accession Protestants rejoiced together at the wonderful working of God's providence, but it was soon to be demonstrated that a Protestant monarch was no more immune from the criticisms and the judgments of Protestant ideologues than her unloved predecessor. None would follow Goodman in his angry denunciation of the establishment and his call for revolution. But even those whose Protestantism was tepidly *politique* in character looked to the interests of the Protestant party at home and abroad rather than to the royal will as the basis of their views on public affairs. In the shrewdly analytical and profoundly political mind of Cecil a detached conception of English national—as distinguished from royal—interest would blend into a thoroughly secularized Protestantism.

He and his fellows would, of course, remain intensely royalist, but they saw no incompatibility between their enthusiastic loyalty to the Queen and their straight-spoken admonitions to her on her political conduct. In the end their enthusiasm for the Queen was as much admiration for an able practitioner of their own art as reverence for her royalty. There was no question yet of challenging the royal direction of the national business; but in the management of that business the Queen had to take account more and more of these cross-currents of feeling and opinion within the politically articulate classes; and indeed, within the Council and the court itself, she was soon to feel the pressures of these novel forces.

While these long-term trends were beginning to affect English political life by 1558, other more immediate circumstances had intensified political malaise. During the years since the death of Henry VIII there had been a dangerous weakening of royal authority. Edward VI had not

lived to reach his majority, and the men who ruled the country in his name had been reckless in their abuse of power. Two peasant revolts, one in Devon and the other in Norfolk, and widespread rioting elsewhere had shaken the social fabric in 1549, and it had taken a force of foreign mercenaries to restore order. The Councillors of Edward indulged themselves in wholesale piracy in lands at the expense of Church and Crown. The climax of this unhappy era came with John Dudley's desperate conspiracy to unseat the Tudors and usurp the throne for his family.

Mary's reign had opened with a loyal rally of the nation around the dynasty, yet within a few months that sentiment was so dissipated that a dangerous revolt, backed by powerful interests at court and in the country, attempted to thwart the Queen's projected Spanish marriage. Even after the overthrow of the rebels, the country continued to display a fractious antipathy towards Philip and a rapidly cooling loyalty towards a ruler who shared so little in her subjects' warmest interests and aspirations. These unhappy years loosened the habits of obedience and of civic order built up slowly and painfully since the beginning of the century and stimulated the revival of old practices of faction and intrigue. There was still a large fund of good will and loyalty towards the dynasty and a longing for the restoration of good order, but these impulses needed direction from a strong royal leadership. The reign of England's first queen regnant since the early Middle Ages had confirmed Englishmen's skepticism as to female government as they looked to the accession of a second woman ruler.

The political atmosphere in which Elizabeth acceded to the throne in November 1558 was deeply affected by

the changes of the previous thirty years. The traditions of early Tudor monarchy were still strong, but they were beginning to assume a slightly archaic air, as they were gradually diluted by the novel political currents flowing from the Reformation. Beyond these general problems lay the uncertainties and the novelties produced by a change in leadership. The young Queen was pretty much an unknown quantity; the men to whom she early gave her confidence were not entirely inexperienced but were untried in the tasks of supreme power. The potentiality of disorder—even of political disintegration—was all too apparent; there were the ill-starred legacies of the late reign; the intense religious feeling; and the dubiety with which men regarded another trial of feminine rulership. In the next few years the Queen was to spread consternation in her court by her choice of the favorite on whom she fixed her affections and then to exasperate her courtiers by a refusal to consider any of the more suitable matches which offered themselves. She was to anger and frustrate them by her unwillingness to provide for the succession. The two men who most fully shared her confidence—Leicester and Cecil—proved to be coldly hostile to one another, and a court faction, including leading noblemen, was organized in opposition to Dudley. Finally, the activities of Mary Stuart, especially after her arrival in England in 1568, led to conspiracy of the most dangerous kind and threatened to topple the regime.

And yet—in spite of all these impediments—by 1572 the regime had survived severe tests and clearly established itself. By no means were problems all solved, not even the most urgent question of the succession, let alone

the longer-range problems posed by the great changes of the past generation. But a season of domestic tranquillity and political stability had opened which would last through the Queen's lifetime and on into the 1620's, when the fierce quarrels between the Stuart kings and their Parliaments heralded the approach of a new storm. It was ruffled only once, at the close of her reign, in the Essex episode.

Any full explanation of this long epoch of domestic peace requires the work of social and economic as much as of political historians,[3] but the first step towards long-term stability lay in the reestablishment of a center of political gravity. Workable and enduring relationships had to be formed at the summit of power before the confidence of the responsible political classes could be won and effective leadership restored to the nation. The process by which this new system of power was hammered out is the central theme of this book. That process was not an orderly or on the whole a very conscious one. It involved three disparate but powerful personalities—Elizabeth herself, Secretary Cecil, and the favorite, Robert Dudley. Naturally the process was affected in part by their own peculiarities of personality, particularly those of the Queen, but it was shaped by the historical events to which they were compelled to respond in their roles at the summit of power. The Queen, a traditionalist and a wholehearted believer in the myth of monarchy, was coolly unsympathetic to most of the impulses stirring among her contemporaries, but she was endowed with a saving grace,

[3] See Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965).

an earthy political pragmatism which made her keenly aware of the limits of political possibility. Cecil and Dudley were conventional men of their time and place, ambitious courtiers, greedy of place and fortune and hopeful of a posterity who would be great men in the land. But far more than their mistress they were responsive to the currents of new ideas and feelings around them. Part of their task was to draw her to a reluctant acceptance of this new-fashioned world.

Although these three were the leaders of the English state, they were not always initiators in the actions in which they moved. This circumstance was in part dictated by the general conditions of the time; western Europe was moving into the most terrible phase of the Reformation, an age of endemic civil and international war, fierce, bitter, and hysterical, and England was borne along on this general tide. Many of the events which most affected the course of English politics arose outside the kingdom, in Scotland, France, or the Low Countries. But the relative passivity of English leadership arose also from the conservatism of the Queen herself, from her profound unwillingness to take action until events forced it. This necessarily limited the actions of her servants, and only in a few rare cases were they able to take the lead in forward movement.

Thus, while the main attention of this book is given to these central and commanding personalities, it is necessarily diverted frequently to the great issues of foreign and domestic policy, all of which, as has been suggested above, cluster, sooner or later, around the magnetic pole of religion. The pattern of power relationships which ultimately evolved was strongly influenced by these larger

forces. The new regime was consequently to develop a more complex and flexible character than that of the last preceding era of relative political stability—the reign of Henry VIII. The emergence of this pattern is the subject matter of what follows below.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF A GOVERNMENT

AT THE MOMENT of Mary's death and in the first hours of the new reign those at the center of power trembled with fears of an opposed or troubled succession, but in a very short time it was apparent they had no reason to worry. Everywhere the Queen was proclaimed with excited jubilation. But many difficult and some dangerous decisions had to be made within the next few weeks. First of all there was the delicate task of forming a new government, of choosing the ministers and servants of the new sovereign. Secondly, the ruinous war with France must be brought to a quick close, at whatever cost to pride and prestige. And, at the same time, the new government must face its first Parliament with a clear-cut program for the national religious establishment. All these tasks were accomplished within less than six months. Hasty as these decisions were, they were bound to have long-term effects. The making of them forms the prologue to the reign and the stuff of our first chapter.

MAKING OF A GOVERNMENT

The most immediate task which faced the new Queen on the day of her accession was the making of a new government. This modern phrase may seem anachronistic, but since constitutional theory held that most major offices of state and household were vacant on a sovereign's demise, the change of monarchs in the sixteenth century was as marked a caesura in the rhythm of government as a change of parties today. Then as now, it was a time for new men, new ideas, and new opportunities. There was the same air of excited expectancy that surrounds a modern Prime Minister as he makes his choices. But, free from the limits of party, the Tudor monarch was able to spread his selections more widely so that incumbent as well as aspirant officeholders waited anxiously to hear their fate.

In another and important respect there was divergence from the modern pattern since the Queen was choosing not a ministry of departmental heads with specified functions and legal responsibilities, but something more like the staff of a great medieval household, a "court" rather than a "government." Its outward and visible structure was rigid and even hieratic in character; inwardly it was far more flexible, informal, indeed "amateurish" than any modern government, since the greater figures would have to fill as many different roles as the actors in a stock company. They would be in turn courtiers, diplomats, soldiers, administrators, and councillors, moving from role to role at the Queen's pleasure. Some of them would enjoy the Queen's utmost trust and confidence without ever holding an office of great consequence, while some of the most dignified officers of state might remain political ciphers. There was no necessary connection between a man's office

and his place in the political firmament; from his relatively minor household post as Master of the Horse, Dudley would shine with more than planetary brilliance. Nonetheless, all the leading men of this reign would be found clustered in the Council and in the greater household offices directly about the Queen's person.

The conventions surrounding the process of forming a new court were few; the Queen's will was unconstrained. Nevertheless, it was taken for granted that a large proportion of the greater nobility (dukes, marquesses, and earls) would win appointments about the sovereign although, as has been said, this offered no sure entree to the inmost circles of her confidence. As a matter of common sense, she would also choose others of her chief officers from the rather small body of experienced legal and administrative experts of the top level, men knowledgeable in the complex routines of state business, the "permanent under-secretaries" of Tudor government. These again might become no more than glorified clerks, diligent executors of instructions like Sir William Petre (Secretary for nearly a decade), or they might be such linchpins of policy-making as Mary's late Chancellor, Bishop Gardiner, or her Lord Privy Seal, Paget. Up to 1558 it had been customary to draw heavily from the upper ranks of the clergy to fill many of the most important Crown posts.

Beyond this, little was certain. Even the function of Council, that all-important pillar of Tudor government, was hardly defined by contemporary practice. Although now firmly established as the executive instrument of the Crown, its corporate identity had emerged only rather slowly and quite recently, and its political importance had varied sharply under Elizabeth's three predecessors. Po-

tentially it could serve not only as a continuing committee for central public business but also as a powerful policy-making body and as the fulcrum of active politics. Under Mary it seems to have served little more than the first of these functions. Whether it would again play a wider role lay in the future actions—and interactions—of the new Councillors and the intentions of the sovereign.

Elizabeth moved with speed and decision in the shaping of her government; between the morrow of her accession and her coronation day, 15 January, the work was in large part accomplished. By then the Council and the greater household offices were all filled. The new Queen made plain her principles of selection in a succinct statement of her views presumably spoken shortly after her accession:

"—and as I am but one body naturally considered although by His permission a body politic to govern, so I shall desire you all, my lords (chiefly you of the nobility, everyone in his degree and power) to be assistant to me that I with my ruling and you with your service may make a good account to Almighty God and leave some comfort to our posterity in earth. I mean to direct all my actions by good advice and counsel. And therefore considering that divers of you be of the ancient nobility, having your beginnings and estates of my progenitors, kings of this realm and thereby [such] ought in honor to have the more natural care for maintaining of my estate and this commonwealth. Some others have been of long experience in governance and enabled by my father of noble memory, my brother, and my late sister to bear office, the rest of you being upon special trust lately called of her service only and trust, for your service considered and rewarded.

. . . And for counsel and advice I shall accept you of my nobility and such others of you the rest as in consultation I shall think meet and shortly appoint. To the which also with their advice I will join to their aid and for ease of their burden others, meet for my service. And they which I shall not appoint, let them not think the same for any disability in them but that for I do consider a multitude doth make rather discord and confusion than good counsel and of my good will you shall not doubt, using yourselves as appertaineth to good and faithful subjects."[1]

Acting consistently on these principles, Elizabeth went about making her choices. Her sister's Council, of nearly thirty members, had been, as the new Queen hinted, large and unwieldy. About a third of them were peers; a dozen were either administrative officials or law officers of the Crown; and four were clerics. A half-dozen household officers served on the Council, nearly all personal adherents of Queen Mary at the time of her accession and a number of them East Anglian squires by origin. Of this whole body barely a third were normally in attendance at Council during the last years of the reign. The regular attenders were largely drawn from the official and household element, the least weighty politically. The greater political figures of the Marian court were conspicuous by their long absences or at best, spasmodic attendance.[2]

Elizabeth was ruthless in her excisions from the Council list. Less than a third of the old Queen's Councillors remained to serve the new. Among the peers the rate of survival was highest; six out of ten were retained. Of those who were dropped, two (Hastings of Loughborough and

[1] PRO, SP 12/1/7, 8.

[2] *APC*, VI, *passim* for Council attendance.

Montague) were Marian creations and lords known for their warm Catholic sympathies; a third (Rich) very rarely attended at any time (six recorded attendances in the entire reign). But the fourth dismissal—that of Lord Paget—was a major political event. Since the death of Bishop Gardiner in 1555, Paget had been the most active and forceful member of the Council, the center of policy-making and decision. He was widely held responsible for English entry into the unlucky war with France.[3] His dismissal necessarily shattered the existing structure of power within the highest political circles.

Among the commoners on the Council the mortality rate was much higher; only four were continued in office by Elizabeth.[4] All these were officials; one of them (Cheyney, Treasurer of the Household and Warden of the Cinque Ports) died before the year was out. These changes meant the elimination from the Council of all the commoners who owed their preferment to the late queen. Virtually the same condition obtained among the peers. William, Lord Howard of Effingham, owed both title and seat at the Council board to Mary, and the Earl of Derby had come to the body at the beginning of her reign, as one of her ardent supporters; however, he rarely attended. The remainder of these noblemen dated their service to the Crown from earlier reigns.

This core of Councillors whom Elizabeth chose to retain is worth close attention. They fall roughly into two groups, one "political" and the other "official" in tone. To

[3] *Hatfield*, 154, for the blame laid on Paget for the war.

[4] A fifth, Sir John Baker, Chancellor of the Exchequer, retained this office but died in December 1558. There is no evidence that he was to remain a Privy Councillor.

the first order belonged the lords Arundel, Clinton, and Pembroke—and, for somewhat different reasons, the Earls of Derby and Shrewsbury. All save Pembroke were magnates of the realm by birthright; entrance to high political place had been theirs for the asking; political consequence had had to be won, but at least the terms of contest were easier than for those of lower birth. These men were winners at the game of high politics; in the court they had reached the highest rung on the ladder of power; in the country they were regional magnates of wide influence.

Arundel, holder of one of the oldest extant titles, had played a great role in Henry's court and campaigns and held the office of Lord Chamberlain at the end of the old King's life.[5] Under Edward he fell out with Dudley and spent an uncomfortable interval in the Tower in some danger of his life; his early and vital support of Mary restored him to high place, and he had been a man of first importance in her court. Clinton, another lord of long descent, had inherited a decayed family fortune, but his first marriage, with the mother of Henry's bastard son, Richmond, had taken him into the Henrician court circle; his second had been to a niece of John Dudley. In the French and Scottish wars he had won fame as a commander, and under Edward obtained the office of Lord Admiral; this post was lost temporarily at the opening of Mary's reign but recovered in 1557. He had sat in Council since 1550.

Pembroke, on the other hand, was an *arriviste* and the only illiterate on the Council. Descendant, through an illegitimate branch, of the old earls of Pembroke, William

[5] Biographical details, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Complete Peerage*.

Herbert had his fortune to make; he had fought his way up step by painful step in the savage competition of Henrician politics, married into the Parrs, and then under Edward acquired both title and great fortune. Probably the greatest single beneficiary of the spoliation of Crown and Church in that reign, he was now among the half-dozen richest men in England.[6] At Elizabeth's accession Herbert was busily engaged in the building up of a great family position in South Wales and in Wiltshire.

The combination of experience, prestige, and personality in each of these lords gave them a first claim on the new Queen's consideration, to which she was quick to respond. Clinton remained Admiral under a life patent; Arundel was retained as Steward;[7] Pembroke, though holding no office, remained a major figure in Council and a diligent attender there.

Two other peers of ancient lineage, Derby and Shrewsbury, were also continued. Neither was a courtier, but their importance in the political life of the realm was hardly less than that of the three lords discussed above. Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, born in 1500, had long service under the Tudors and since 1550 had been Lord President of the North as well as lieutenant of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Nottinghamshire. From his seat at Sheffield Castle in the West Riding he presided over a great cluster of estates

[6] PRO, SP 11/19; Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), 138, and Appendix VIII.

[7] For Clinton's grant as Admiral see *CPR, 1557-58*, 2. Arundel appears in the *APC* of Mary as Lord Steward until the summer of 1557; from his return to the Council in January 1558 he is listed simply as Lord Arundel; in Elizabeth's reign he is first called Lord Steward 23 December 1558 (*APC*, VII, 27).

extending through the counties of Nottingham and Derby, which made him, next to the Duke of Norfolk, the richest peer in the realm.[8] Across the Pennines, Stanley, Earl of Derby, enjoyed a regional eminence in Lancashire and Cheshire comparable to that of the Talbots. Although holding no major Crown office, Derby too was retained on the Council as a sleeping partner. Common sense recommended cordial relations with these great lords, who, though seldom seen at court, enjoyed pervading influence across their remote countrysides. Even though they did not choose to play a great part at the political center, their passive good will was vital to the Crown. In ordinary times it was imperative for the routine governance of society. In times of stress their support might spell the difference between survival and destruction for the regime.

Of the other peers held over from the Marian Council, one, Howard, was a special case. Deputy of Calais under Edward, he was appointed Councillor and raised to the Lords by Mary, but he had been a staunch and powerful friend to the princess Elizabeth in her hours of hardest trial after the Wyatt Rebellion.[9] He was also her great-uncle. On him she bestowed the Office of Lord Chamberlain of the Household. Howard, quite in contrast to his noble colleagues, was a court peer, with a very modest estate (perhaps not much more than £500 a year) to

[8] *The State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler*, 3 v., edited by Arthur Clifford (Edinburgh, 1809), I, 388; Stone, *Aristocracy*, Appendix VIII.

[9] J. A. Froude, *History of England* (London, 1875), V, 390, 398, 500, 528.

whom his Chamberlain's fee of £100 a year with additional perquisites was a significant increase in income.[10]

The last of the Councillor-peers to note is Paulet, Marquis of Winchester. Another *arriviste*, he had, as a royal administrator, climbed a somewhat safer and easier path than Pembroke. By 1539 he was rewarded with a peerage; in 1550 he secured the Treasurership. Safely riding through all the gales of the 1550's, he not only kept his office but advanced in the peerage to a marquisate. He was now a very old man, probably an octogenarian. Although his great house at Basingstoke in Hampshire and his estates there made him a county magnate (his son Chidiock was Governor of Portsmouth) he was engrossed in the major administrative reforms he was carrying through in the Treasury and should be classed among the bureaucrats rather than among the great peers of the Council. Elizabeth confirmed him in his office in January 1559.[11]

The remaining holdover members fell in the same category of officials. Mason, Treasurer of the Chamber since the preceding year, had a long career behind him, dating back to the 1530's. Originally he had taken minor holy orders, but in the 1540's he followed the same road as others, and crossed over into secular life. After a hopeful start under Henry, his career was rapidly advanced under Edward and he became a Privy Councillor in 1550; he continued there under Mary, charged with numerous important diplomatic missions. The story of his colleague, Sir William Petre, was not very different: a cleric initially

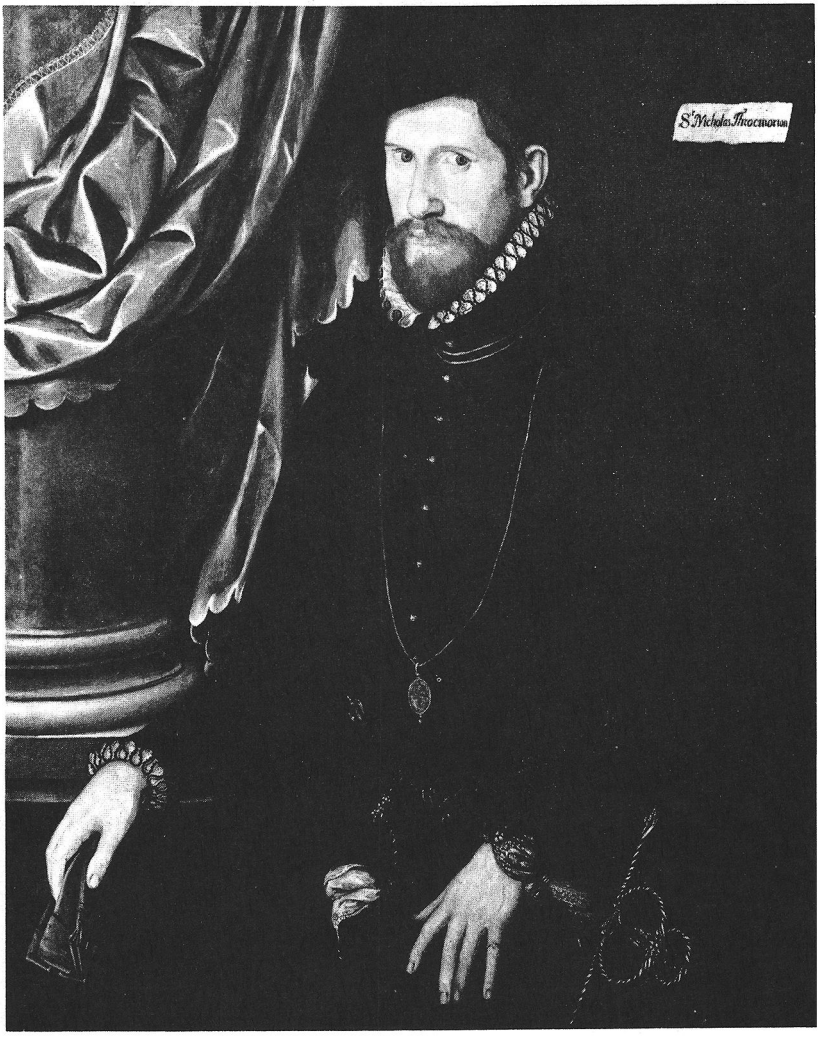
[10] BM, Lansdowne Mss., ix, f. 49.
[11] *CPR, 1558-60*, 59.

(but then the founder of a county family),[12] an administrator under Henry, and then Secretary for a decade under the old King, Somerset, Northumberland, and Mary. He had resigned that post in 1557 but continued a Councillor. A self-effacing man, he was the very embodiment of a hard-working, politically neutral bureaucrat. Nicholas Wotton, the third holdover, was in some ways a more old-fashioned figure; still a cleric, he was a notable pluralist, holding the deaneries of both York and Canterbury among other benefices. But for all practical purposes he was a lay servant of the Crown and for two decades—except for a brief tenure as Secretary under Edward—had been almost uninterruptedly engaged in diplomatic missions. Even more than Petre, Wotton, withdrawn from the hurly-burly of politics, was the specialist civil servant. Thus of the continuing Councillors all but Derby had held high office before Mary came to the throne and had been intimate in the high political circles of her father's time.

Elizabeth retained briefly one other Marian Councillor, Archbishop Heath, who resigned from the Chancellorship at the accession but until the end of the year remained in the Council. Her new appointments began with the first recorded Council of the reign, at Hatfield on 20 November, and were almost complete by Christmas. Two peers were added: Francis, second Earl of Bedford, and William Parr, newly restored Marquis of Northampton. Bedford had succeeded his father (a major political figure for several decades) only three years earlier and was well known as the most outspoken Protestant in the peerage. Parr, who had lost his title in 1553 for his support of Lady

[12] See F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary* (London, 1961) for a biography of Petre.

William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, 1501(?)-1570



Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 1515-1571

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1532(?)-1588

Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, 1526(?)-1583

Edward Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, 1512-1585

Jane Grey, was brother to Henry's last queen and brother-in-law to Pembroke. The commoners now appointed included the husbands of two cousins of Elizabeth on the Boleyn side. Sir Richard Sackville had been Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations until 1553. His career had been checked by Mary's accession although he was able to salvage a handsome pension for his now extinct office; from early in the new year 1559 he was Under-Treasurer of England. A second cousin by marriage, Sir Francis Knollys, returned from exile in Protestant Strasburg in January. Another new Councillor was Elizabeth's long-time steward, Sir Thomas Parry, now Treasurer of her Household. Sir Edward Rogers, a Somerset squire and Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to King Edward, was appointed to Council and Household (as Comptroller). Another country gentleman—but one without previous experience at court—was Sir Ambrose Cave, a Warwick-Leicestershire squire and a connection of Cecil's. He sat in the first Council on 18 November and a month later became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in place of the Marian Councillor, Waldegrave.[13] As Secretary the Queen on the first day of her reign had chosen Sir William Cecil; to succeed Heath in the Chancellor's office she nominated the new Secretary's brother-in-law, Sir Nicholas Bacon, hitherto Attorney of the Court of Wards. This made a total of under twenty members, barely two-thirds the size of Mary's Council.

[13] There was a reshuffling of Household posts in early 1559. After the death of Cheyney, Parry succeeded to his office as Treasurer of the Household; Rogers replaced Parry as Comptroller; and Knollys replaced Rogers as Vice-Chamberlain. For Cave see R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster* (London, 1953), 395, under date 22 December 1558.