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CHANGES AT THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Medieval Background: Constitutional development of Anglican Christianity from the Norman Conquest to the Reformation centered around four major clashes between Church and state, each involving an Archbishop of Canterbury, a King, and an issue:

1) Archbishop Anselm, King Henry I, and the Gregorian reform movement which was seeking to assert papal supremacy over the entire Church. Late 11th--early 12th century.

2) Archbishop Thomas Becket, King Henry II, and whether the Church courts would be free and independent of the state courts, especially in jurisdiction over criminous clerks. Later 12th century.

3) Archbishop Stephen Langton and Pope Innocent III, King John and the Magna Carta, and the claim of the papacy to "provide" its own candidate to every episcopal vacancy. Early 13th century.

4) Archbishop Robert Winchelsey, Pope Boniface VIII, and King Edward I, and the claims of Church, crown, and papacy to control ecclesiastical taxation. Late 13th--early 14th century.

At the eve of the Reformation, Church-state relations in England continued to focus around clashes 3 and 4, the struggle over episcopal appointments and papal provisions to all benefices, and the struggle over ecclesiastical taxation, the control of church finance and wealth. As the later medieval papacy became increasingly absorbed with these two interests (especially through its Chancery, for provisions, and its Camera, for collection of revenues), there was something of a "spiritual" vacuum created at the top of the later medieval church. Hence, by the time of the 16th century in England, the royal claims to spiritual power and functions (such as Henry VIII"s claim to be Supreme Head, etc.) were at least partly a reaction to the vacuum created by the later medieval papacy's pre-occupation with temporal power and functions. The rise "from below" of a more interiorist and personalist spirituality throughout western Europe at this time, fueled partly by the increasing ascendancy of Nominalism and its denial of universal realities, also helped to fill this void and can be seen in England in such writers as Julian of Norwich and the Cloud of Unknowing.

After the last two post-Conquest struggles between church and crown, the political and constitutional history of the late medieval English church experienced no more major clashes. Rather, it saw an alliance, at least implicit, between crown and papacy often at the expense of the English church itself, in the neuralgic areas of finances and provisions. In finances, papal taxation of the English Church continued and escalated for "ecclesiastical" needs, but the crown retained a large portion of the money that was collected, the pope and king ostensively disagreeing but splitting the proceeds for their own needs. In provisions, the full papal claim to the right to provide to every ecclesiastical benefice in the western world was set forth for the first time in the papal bull Licet ecclesiarum of 1265, and practice gradually moved toward filling this theoretical claim, especially in the bishoprics whose occupants were also expected to be great feudal landholders and advisors to the crown. The last English bishop not "provided" to his see before the Reformation was Bp. Trilleck of Hereford, chosen in 1344. In papal provisions, as in finances, there was a tacit alliance of crown and papacy, the crown usually nominating its own candidate, whom the pope would then provide.

Royal claims against papal canon law in these areas were set forth in the statutes of Provisors (1351) and Praemunire (1353), which were reissued at various times in the middle ages and eventually formed the basis for much of the Tudor anti-papal legislation. These statutes obviously conflicted with the developing canon law on such matters, and when the claims of crown and pope, especially in the areas of provisions and finance, are pushed to extremes, the English Reformation breaks. Hence:

JRW thesis: There are two leading views of what happened at the English Reformation: (1). Political, constitutional, canonical, structural, institutional change, summarized in the background that is sketched out above. (2). Theological, doctrinal, religious change. These two views can best be understood and synthesized as two different stages of the same happening, rather than as mutually incompatible explanations of the same phenomenon. This can be seen most easily by just looking at the dates when various things happened.

TWO STAGES OR PHASES:

Stage One: Henrician period, from 1527 to the death of Henry VIII in 1547: Political, constitutional, church reform as an act of state, modifications in structure and organization that result in independence of the Church in England from papal control, as the claims over provisions and finances are pushed to the extremes. Some features:

1531: King declared "Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy" ("so far as the law of Christ allows": dropped in 1534 Act of Supremacy which severed papal allegiance). [Later changed to "Supreme Governor" in 1559 Act of Supremacy under Elizabeth I].

1532: Submission of the Clergy. Convocations of clergy can now meet only if summoned by royal writ. Royal consent now necessary for church law. Medieval canon law not prejudicial to the royal prerogative is to remain in force, but now it is clearly subordinated to the common and statute law of the realm.

1533: Act in Restraint of Appeals. Stopped all appeals, such as over benefices, finances, or matrimony, from going to the court of Rome. Highest church courts are now those within the realm.

1534: Act for Submission of the Clergy. Formalizes what happened in 1532.

1534: Act of Supremacy. Severs papal allegiance. King is "the only supreme Head in earth of the Church of England."

1534: Cranmer drops title "Legate of the Apostolic See," and adds title "Metropolitan," now exercising by his own right powers he had formerly exercised by papal authority.

1534: Establishment of Faculty Office and the Court of Faculties. Transfer (really, theft) of power to grant faculties from pope to Archbishop of Canterbury as Metropolitan, with fees now going to the Crown. Examples of faculties (=enablements): Non-residence (no longer for papal clerks, but for royal clerks and chaplains of bishops and nobles and for all clerks holding higher degrees in theology), dispensations from religious vows, matrimonial dispensations, permissions to break Lenten fast, permissions to celebrate Mass in private oratories, permissions to own and use portable altars, etc.

1534: Act Forbidding Dispensations and Peter's Pence.

1534: Act in Absolute Restraint of Annates and Concerning the Election of Bishops. Removed papal control over Episcopal Provisions and over Finances.

Episcopal provisions: Last bishop in England who had not been provided (=appointed) by the pope was Bp. Trilleck of Hereford, 1344. Now England returns to earlier practice of royal nomination; capitular election remains a formality governed by royal "license to elect" always now accompanied by royal letters missive, with failure to obey subject to the penalties of Praemunire. Authority and necessity of papal bulls for consecration is now denied.

Finances: This act also removed papal control over finances of the English church, which at this time comprised twelve of the forty wealthiest sees in the western church (of 717 total), looked upon with greed by an English government that was bankrupt at this time. Eight of the ten basic sources of papal financial income from English sources, outlined in 1500 pages by Prof. W.E. Lunt, were terminated at this time: Peter's Pence, Census of Exempt and Protected Monasteries, Royal

Tribute, Subsidies, Obventions and legacies for the Crusades, Indulgences, Procurations for Papal Envoys, and Miscellaneous; and the other two were diverted from the Papacy to the Crown: 1) Mandatory and Voluntary Income Taxes, which since 1336 had been sporadic and merely voluntary, were now made mandatory with a new mandatory tax in 1534 of 10% of the spiritual and temporal income of all English benefices to go to the Crown in perpetuity. (And their assessed value was increased nearly 50% by the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535, over the last previous valuationof 1291); and 2) Service Taxes and Annates, portions of the first year's income from every new incumbent of a benefice, which are now increased, with no more exceptions allowed, and diverted from the pope to the king.

Result of financial changes: Total volume of taxation of English clergy now increased almost three times, and no longer to the pope but to the crown alone.

1535: Thomas Cromwell is appointed Vicar-General of Henry VIII, granting him unlimited ecclesiastical jurisdiction as representing the Supreme Head of the English Church. Institutes plan for financial nationalization of the English Church, for state to seize most church income and property and pay the clergy from it: 1) Gradual seizure of most episcopal temporalities, e.g. 9/10 of Canterbury by end of reign of H8 in 1547; and 2) In two stages over 1536-40, Dissolution of the Monasteries, which at this time comprised about 50% of the total wealth of the English Church, and over three times the total wealth of the Crown.

1536-40: Dissolution of the Monasteries: Not dissolved because of any fanatical devotion they had to the papacy, but because of the financial greed of the Crown. "Bare runied choirs where late the sweet birds sang." Disappearance of the mitred abbots in the House of Lords meant that the total clerical vote there declined by an absolute majority to a minority. Dispersal of monastic treasures and libraries (not yet a British Museum, although a plan for such a thing at that time failed). Establishment of six new episcopal sees, cathedral grammar schools, five Regius Professorships in each University (Oxford & Cambridge), etc.

1535: First Complete Bible Printed in English (Coverdale). Published in Zurich, and not sponsored by the English government.

1536: Ten Articles (Preface discusses concept of "adiaphora").

1536, 1538: Henrician Visitation Injunctions, imposed by Cromwell.

1537: Bishops' Book.

1539: Six Articles.

1539: The Great Bible, sponsored by Cromwell. Its second edition, 1540, contained famous preface by Cranmer observing that initial perusal of Scriptures does tend to enhance, rather than undermine, the power of the monarch under God.

1543: The King's Book.

1543: Rationale of Ceremonial.

1544: English Litany.

1545: King's Prymer.

1545, 1547: Chantries Acts.

Concluding Observations to Stage One: 1) Continuity of traditional Catholic faith and practice; 2) Re-definition of past history in a way that enabled changes to seem like restorations. 3) Concept of one national commonwealth, both state and church, with a quasi-episcopal king replacing the pope. 4) But was reformation inevitable in England and did the people want it? Dickens & MacCulloch = yes; Duffy & Haigh = no.

Stage Two: Beginning with Edward VI in 1547. Religious reform, modifications in doctrine expressed primarily in liturgical change but not so far-reaching or radical as on the continent, with English bishops leading in *both* stages. Book of Common Prayer becomes the defining moment, but not the origin, of "Anglicanism." Some features of Stage Two:
1547: First Book of Homilies (early Edward VI).
1547: Edwardian Visitation Injunctions.
1548: Order of Communion.
1549: First Prayer Book of Edward VI. Cranmer the chief author; synthesis of catholic doctrine of Holy Orders with protestant/Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith.
1549: First Act of Uniformity.
1550: Book of Common Prayer Noted (by Merbecke).
1550: First English Ordinal.
1552: Second Prayer Book of Edward VI.
1552: Second Act of Uniformity.
1552: Cranmer's attempted "Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum."
1553: Forty-Two Articles.
1553-58: Queen Mary: Statues of Repeal, Injunctions.
1558-1603: Queen Elizabeth I.
1559: Elizabethan Act of Supremacy. Monarch is "Supreme Governor of the Church of England."
1559: First Prayer Book of Elizabeth I.
1559: Third Act of Uniformity, reintroducing and slightly amending the 1552 BCP.
1559: Elizabethan Visitation Injunctions.
1559: 17 December, Consecration of Matthew Parker as Archbishop of Canterbury.
1560: Geneva Bible.
1562: John Jewel's "Apology of the Church of England."
1563-71: Thirty-Nine Articles.
1568: Bishops' Bible.
1569: Declaration of the Proceedings.
1570: Elizabeth excommunicated by the Pope.
1571: Canons.
1571: Second Book of Homilies (Elizabethan)
1572: First and Second Admonitions to Parliament.
1593-97: Richard Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity."
1604: Canons.
1662: Prayer Book and revised Ordinal.

Concluding Observations to Stage Two: 1) Uniform national experience of worship. 2) Unity more of worship than of doctrinal confession. Liturgical unity/uniformity more apparent than doctrinal unity/uniformity. 3) Distinction between things indifferent ("adiaphora") and things that matter. 4) No single major national English theologian of reform, comparable to Luther or Calvin on the European continent. 5) Episcopal structure in England went with the reform in England, at both stages. (Most of the Henrician bishops were civil servants with degrees in civil law; few were theologians, and the King's dispute with the pope over sovereignty did not seem to them primarily a doctrinal matter). 6) Lex orandi lex credendi. 7) The nation that prays together stays together; parallels with Constantine and Charlemagne.