

ELIZABETH REGINA

In a typically forthright piece the other day in *The Australian* [*This Decaying Throne of Our Queen, This Septic Isle*, June 7, 2012] English commentator, Theodore Dalrymple, lamented the decay of culture and social behaviour of the British people even as he praised Queen Elizabeth II on the celebration of her Diamond Jubilee.

“None of this is the Queen’s fault: her self-mastery and devotion to duty have been exemplary. She deserved a better country...”

Let us recall a few facts about the realm of England and its people. First, thanks to the claim of her celebrated predecessor, the second Henry Tudor, the appalling Henry VIII, Elizabeth II is the head of the Catholic Church in England, that is, of *The Church of England*. One would think the responsibilities of such a position, grounded though it be in so improbable a claim, would compel the incumbent to a rigorous upholding of moral principle in every circumstance.

Elizabeth’s uncle, King Edward VIII, decided that a divorcee was more important to him than the throne of England. The Queen’s son, Charles, has demonstrated by the treatment of his late wife that he would have made a fit son for his great uncle. He is on record, too, as asserting that the title bestowed by the Pope on Henry VIII for defending the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, a title zealously retained by each of his successors, *Fidei Defensor*, should now read ‘Defender of faiths’—whatever that might mean. The Faith to which the title refers, the Faith established by Jesus Christ and secured by His Catholic Church, Henry abandoned a few years after, an abandonment maintained by his successors for 450 years, the only exception being the daughter he had abused, Mary.

The signal failure of the English people has not, as Dalrymple contends, been in culture and behaviour, but in morals. The descent into socialism with its inevitable institutionalised selfishness, the loss of the sense of the fitting, the *bonum honestum*, the loss of culture, are but consequences of the systematic moral betrayal which has flowed from the rejection of God’s authority.

While it began much earlier, the moral rot in England was arguably formalised in July 1930 when the Lambeth Conference of the Church of England—the Church let it be insisted whose head was the then current English Monarch—gave qualified approval to the practice of ‘birth control’. Pope Pius XI issued a fitting condemnation of this abandonment of principle before year’s end in *Casti connubii*.

In 1938 the mentality antagonistic to the rule of morals persuaded British gynaecologist Dr Aleck Bourne that he should perform, publicly and provocatively, the abortion of a 14 year old girl raped by a group of royal guardsmen. The doctor’s trial for the crime demonstrated how abandonment of the moral law affects the intellect. This was a hard case and hard cases make bad law. But it was solvable legally and morally if the court would adhere to the moral principles—*It is not licit to*

do evil that good may come of it: No one is entitled to kill an innocent human being. Regrettably, the presiding judge, Mr Justice McNaghten, elected to qualify the moral principles, directing the jury that the defendant did not act 'unlawfully' for the purposes of the relevant Act if he had acted in good faith in the exercise of his clinical judgement.¹ *The Lancet*, the celebrated medical journal, subsequently praised Dr Bourne's actions as *an example of disinterested conduct in consonance with the highest traditions of the profession*, demonstrating even at that date compromise of the hypocritical oath among members of the medical profession.

Once an *absolute*—here the sanctity of human life—is treated as a *relative* good, moral collapse is inevitable. For five years thereafter the British peoples suffered the consequences of this corruption of principle at the hands of Hitler's Nazi regime. They proved to have short memories. On 27 October 1967 the English parliament passed the *Abortion Bill* legalising the murder of the innocent unborn for various specious reasons. The Bill was presented to the Queen for the royal assent. She gave that assent and the *Abortion Act 1967* came into effect on 27 April 1968.

Contrast with her action that of King Baudouin of Belgium. In 1990 when a bill liberalising the country's abortion laws was passed by the Belgian Parliament he told the government he would not assent to it. As with most constitutional and popular monarchies royal assent in Belgium had long been a formality. Nevertheless, he insisted he would not exercise his will in favour of the measure. The government, declaring him unable to reign *pro tem*, passed the law without his assent restoring him to the throne a day or so later. Contrast with Elizabeth's action that of Prince Alois of Liechtenstein. Early in May this year he told his people that he was prepared to abdicate if the Principality proceeded with a referendum to approve an abortion law.²

Inversion of values is part of the syndrome of Protestantism. The Protestant thinks God exists to serve the State, rather than the State being subject to God as the source of all authority [*Romans 13: 1*]. This reversing of principle is behind the criticism, frequently heard, that the Catholic is a traitor for putting fidelity to God above his duty to the State. It is consistent with this mentality that if the State passes a law allowing the breach of some primary precept such as the Fifth Commandment the Protestant sees no difficulty with the compromise. If God exists to serve the State, the State may moderate His Commands as it deems necessary. This is the reason why Elizabeth gave her assent to the *Abortion Act*. It is because they were *not* Protestants that Baudouin and Alois refused to take the same course.

The consequences of the abandonment of moral principle among the English people are, 45 years on, plain for all to see. "The odour of unstoppable decay,"

¹ Dr Bourne was later to regret his actions, or what they had led to, and assisted in founding the English Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child.

² Cf. <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2012/05/07/the-prince-of-liechtenstein-is-upholding-natural-justice-in-his-threat-to-veto-a-law-legalising-abortion/>

Dalrymple remarks, “is everywhere evident.” American journalist Mark Steyn is one of many who have passed similar observations.

Queen Elizabeth II has, indeed, been a rock of stability in a tumultuous sea. She cannot last forever. With her passing the collapse of the English throne would seem almost inevitable. The process begun almost 500 years ago when Henry Tudor rejected God’s authority in favour of his own is approaching its end.

What, then, of England, mother of so many of our readers? There is something prophetic—*mutatis mutandis*—in the words, the Catholic, Shakespeare placed in the mouth of the ailing John of Gaunt respecting a time when England was still Catholic, before the Tudors had risen to trouble the lives of its peoples.

This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,—
For Christian service and true chivalry,—
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world’s ransom, Blessed Mary’s Son:
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out,—I die pronouncing it,—
Like to a tenement or pelting farm:
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds:
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself...³

Michael Baker
9th June 2012

³ *Richard II*, Act II, sc. 1, l. 40 et seq.