

MARY TUDOR

Si Deus est pro nobis, quis contra nos?¹

Mary, the first Queen of England, reigned for just five and a half years. She was, of all the principal figures of the turbulent sixteenth century, the most strongly orthodox Catholic. Her people were divided by her father's scandalous behaviour. She faced immense burdens with little training. She sought in good conscience to cope but was limited by a certain stubbornness of character. She erred in preferring the counsel of the Emperor Charles V, her cousin, to that of her Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner. Following that counsel brought about her untimely end.

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The Catholic faith is like life itself. It will survive, it will flourish, only if nourished and protected. The faith in England lost the nourishment and protection it required under Henry VIII. The English bishops compromised themselves and their offices. They disregarded the victory their great forbear Thomas of Canterbury had won over Henry II, and betrayed the leadership of the Church to the King. Only one stood firm, John Cardinal Fisher, and Henry executed him. Protestantism, that German thing, was freed to infect the English realm and the faith of thousands languished, then died. Henry, like Martin Luther, the heretic he had condemned in 1521², abandoned Christ's Church because of personal moral problems. The doctrinal deviations that followed the actions of both were but a rationalisation after the event.

Henry set himself up in England, as Luther had done in Germany, in the place of Christ. He ignored the doctrinal defects of Thomas Cranmer, a theologian who had adopted the Lutheran postulates. Cranmer could provide the relief Henry's appetites craved in a moral and theological pretence at rectitude; therefore Cranmer could do no wrong. With his aid Henry could pretend to uphold the faith while he denied Catholic principle in serial breaches of the ten commandments. Pope Clement VII's endorsement of Henry's choice as Archbishop of Canterbury was to work incalculable harm. Cranmer compromised sacraments and liturgy and the Protestant virus infiltrated the Catholic body.

Mary Tudor, the only surviving child of Henry and his Queen, Catherine of Aragon, youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabel of Spain, was born in 1516. Henry's first public crime was the repudiation of his wife. In May 1533, he achieved through Cranmer what he had worked towards for ten years, the contrived annulment of his marriage (referred to incorrectly as a 'divorce'). The second crime was his illicit, and bigamous, marriage to Anne Boleyn in January of the same year.

¹ "If God is for us, who can be against us?" The Venetian diplomat, Francesco Soranzo, says that Mary could often be heard murmuring this phrase to herself. Cf. Alison Weir, *Children of England; The Heirs of King Henry VIII*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1996, pp. 6, 199.

² In the pamphlet *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* in which Henry defended the Catholic teaching on indulgences attacked by Luther.

The third was his direction of parliament to declare Mary, his legitimate daughter, illegitimate.

Anne lasted little more than three years in Henry's affections before he had her executed. Catherine died of natural causes in the same year and, accordingly, Edward, the son born to Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, in 1537 was his lawful heir entitled under English law to the throne of England in priority to Mary, though 21 years her junior. Elizabeth, the daughter Henry had by Anne, had no such entitlement. By the laws both of Church and State at the time Henry purported to annul his marriage to Catherine, Elizabeth was illegitimate.

No English monarch is the founder of the crown or of its privileges. He exercises these powers for a time but he has no right to dictate the terms of succession of the crown after him. This did not stop Henry Tudor whose hubris was such that he thought nothing of assuming to himself the Divine prerogative of headship in England of the Church founded by Almighty God. By his will, confirmed by the Act of Succession of 1544, Henry 'bequeathed' the crown to Edward and his heirs. If these should fail, he directed that the crown should pass to Mary and her heirs (despite the declaration of illegitimacy). Failing heirs of Mary, Elizabeth (declared by law after Anne's disgrace, what she had ever been, illegitimate) was to succeed. And if Elizabeth should produce no children, the crown was to pass to the heirs of Henry's younger sister, Mary.³

In the veins of Mary Tudor ran the blood of two Queens of character. Her maternal grandmother, Isabel of Castille, is one of the great figures of European history. Her mother, Catherine of Aragon, Isabel's daughter, had stood against her unworthy husband with little support.

Every man brings to the office he undertakes his strengths and weaknesses of soul, whether innate or acquired. So Mary Tudor brought to the office of Queen, her strengths—love for her people, courage, a reasonably good perception of character, obstinacy, purity of heart, capacity for hard work, loyalty to the memory of her much wronged mother and an unwavering Catholic faith. She brought, too, her weaknesses: naivety, obstinacy (a weakness as much as a strength), lack of shrewdness in political dealings, lack of the moral strength to dominate her advisers, and a lack of comprehension of the extent of the harm done by her evil father. She had advantages in the advice of her uncle, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. But there were disadvantages here, too, and she was not so astute as to recognise them. Charles' advice was too often coloured by self interest as he mixed the noble aspiration of bringing England back to the faith with his desire as Emperor to advance the interests of the Hapsburg empire. Mary had a better adviser in England,

³ In this exercise Henry sought to exclude the entitlement of the one who was rightfully Queen of England upon the death of his legitimate daughter, Mary, her second cousin, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, granddaughter of Henry's elder sister, Margaret. It is worthy of note that no dynasty ever eventuated from Henry's Will. Each of his children died childless. In contrast, Mary Queen of Scots, the heir he rejected, *was* the founder of a dynasty, though the child she bore, James, was duly 'protestantised' by those who controlled him.

Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, but she failed to appreciate his worth, until it was too late.

Her Courage

After the death of her father Mary persisted in holding to the Catholic faith and to hearing daily Mass. Protestant pressures were placed upon her by the juvenile King under the Protector, Somerset, and his successors in control of the King, Seymour and John Dudley, Earl of Warwick (later Duke of Northumberland). But she stood firm.

Edward was denied a Catholic upbringing through the negligence of his father. The boy fell victim to the Protestant pretence as 'the true religion' and the mindset that Catholicism was 'a vain superstition'. Mary appealed against Edward's controllers to the Emperor and the pressure he was able to bear persuaded them she should be allowed as an exception to the conformity they sought to impose. When Charles' intervention seemed to fail she told them to their face she would sooner give up her life than her Catholic faith.

As Edward lay dying in July 1553, Northumberland moved to complete the plans he had been hatching to secure the throne for his own family. He called Mary to London but, fearing his influence, she retreated to her domain in Norfolk. On Edward's death, Northumberland forced his daughter in law, the Lady Jane Grey, granddaughter of Henry's younger sister, Margaret, to take the throne and published the fact to all the world.

Informed by his English ambassador, Jehan Scheyfve, Charles V counselled Mary to accept the *fait accompli*. She would have none of it! She knew herself to be the rightful heir to the throne both according to the unwritten law of England and her late father's will. As soon as she was certain of Edward's death, with none but local supporters about her Mary proclaimed herself Queen. She had a notice, couched in regal terms, conveyed to London. Its proclamation ruined a banquet Northumberland had organised to celebrate Lady Jane's elevation. He then led a force north to capture, or to kill, her but the populace rallied to Mary and their numbers grew to the point where they were overwhelming. There was hardly a skirmish before Northumberland capitulated.

Six months after her coronation, when, after some agonising, Mary had resolved on marriage to Phillip II of Spain, a rising was instigated in various parts of the country by those who would not countenance a Spaniard having access to the throne of England. The rising was not particularly well contrived. It languished in various parts of the country but a force of some 7,000 men from Kent led by Sir Thomas Wyatt marched on London. There was panic in the city and Mary's advisers counselled her to fly. She would not. Telling them to trust in God, she descended to the Guildhall and addressed the Lord Mayor and aldermen and a huge crowd gathered there.

“I am come in mine own person to tell you that which you already see and know; that is, how traitorously and rebelliously a number of Kentishmen have assembled themselves against us and you. What I am ye right well know: I am your queen, to whom at my coronation, when I was wedded to the realm and laws of the same, you promised your allegiance and obedience... My father, as ye all know, possessed the same regal state which now rightly is descended unto me, and to him ye always showed yourselves most faithful and loving subjects; and therefore I doubt not but ye will show yourselves likewise to me.

“I say to you on the word of a prince, I cannot tell how naturally the mother loveth the child, for I was never the mother of any; but certainly, if a prince and governor may as naturally and earnestly love her subjects as the mother doth love the child, then assure yourselves that I, being your lady and mistress, do as earnestly and tenderly love and favour you. And I, thus loving you, cannot but think that ye as heartily and faithfully love me. And then I doubt not but we shall give these rebels a short and speedy overthrow.

“But for marriage, I will not for mine own pleasure choose where I lust for I am not so desirous that I need a husband. For God, I thank him, I have hitherto lived a virgin and doubt not that with God’s grace I am able so to live still. But if, as my progenitors have done before me, it may please God that I might leave some fruit of my body behind me to be your governor, I trust you would not only rejoice thereat, but also I know it would be to your great comfort. And, on the word of a queen, I promise you that if it shall not probably appear to all the nobility and commons that this marriage shall be for the high benefit and commodity of the realm, then I will abstain from marriage while I live.

“I am minded to live and die with you, and strain every nerve in our cause, for this time your fortunes, goods, honour, personal safety, wives and children are all in the balance. If you bear yourselves like good subjects, I am bound to stand by you, for you will deserve the care of your sovereign lady.

“And now, good subjects, pluck up your hearts, and like true men face up against these rebels, and fear them not, for I assure you I fear them nothing at all!”

Of this speech, Mary’s diligent critic John Foxe later wrote grudgingly, “she seemed to have perfectly conned [it] without book.” The citizens of the city responded with a loud ovation and by the following morning some 25,000 men had rallied to defend her. Wyatt’s force approached the city but its morale evaporated in the face of the opposition and Wyatt surrendered. Again Mary had achieved victory with little loss of life.

Her Charity

Northumberland was guilty of treason. No one doubted he should be executed for endeavouring to oust the lawful heir to the throne—and he was. Mary’s Councillors advised her also to have Jane Grey and her husband, Guildford Dudley, Northumberland’s youngest son, put to death. She refused to do so. That they had committed treason was undoubted but she recognised they had been pawns in the hands of Northumberland and of Jane’s parents, the Duke of Suffolk and his wife Frances Brandon, daughter of Henry’s younger sister, Mary.⁴ Jane wrote a full

⁴ There can hardly have been few in the whole of English royal history more unfortunate than Lady Jane Grey. She was deprived of her Catholic inheritance by being raised a Protestant. She was bullied unmercifully by her parents and used by them to serve their own and Northumberland’s ends. She was

account of the events surrounding her elevation which was presented to the Queen. She was impressed with its candour, and Jane's unwillingness to make excuses for her conduct. Mary allowed their trial for treason, at which each pleaded 'Guilty', but indicated that she would not enforce the penalty. It was commuted to imprisonment until the realm was settled sufficiently for them to be released.

Mary was under no illusions about Lady Jane. Late in 1550 whilst on a visit with her parents to Mary's house at Newhall in Essex, the girl had mocked the Blessed Sacrament in the house chapel and her conduct was reported to Mary. It was also reported to her that Jane had referred to the Catholic God as "a detestable idol invented by Romish popes and the abominable college of crafty cardinals."⁵ These were, of course, but parrotings of the Calvinist propagandists who had formed her, but they cemented in Mary a dislike for her. Yet she was not so unjust as to hold the religious differences between them against Jane on the separate question of her treasonable conduct.

Mary's Council advised her also to put to death various of Northumberland's entourage including Winchester, Pembroke and Northampton. Again, she refused, preferring to exercise the virtue of clemency. Simon Renard, Charles' ambassador in England, warned that she was displaying a weakness that might prove fatal. But she was adamant. He had to concede that had she executed all those involved in Northumberland's attempted coup she would have very few subjects left.

A further instance of Mary's charity in adhering to the demands of justice over natural dislike occurred with her half-sister Elizabeth. Elizabeth was seventeen years her junior and, in her adolescence, Mary had lavished a maternal affection on the new baby. But she was separated from her for many years during which Elizabeth was formed by those in charge of her in the Protestant mould. Mary came to dislike her half-sister, regarding her as duplicitous. The memory that Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, had displaced her own mother from the King's affections could not be expunged. She had not forgotten the spite which had been shown her by Anne.⁶ She came to mistrust Elizabeth, and after she became Queen, to mistrust Elizabeth's attendance at Mass and other Catholic ceremonies as nothing but show. Yet, when it was highly probable that Elizabeth had played some part, obliquely no doubt, in Wyatt's rebellion of January 1554, Mary would not follow the advice of her Councillors led by Gardiner, that Elizabeth should be executed. In the absence of objective evidence, she would not condemn her. Yet Elizabeth herself thought she was doomed.⁷

forced against her will to take the crown. She reigned for just nine days and spent the remainder of her short life in custody.

⁵ Alison Weir, *Children of England; The Heirs of King Henry VIII*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1996, p. 114.

⁶ Mary often maintained to her familiars that Elizabeth was not Henry's daughter at all but the daughter (by Anne Boleyn) of Mark Smeaton, a court musician who was executed with Anne for alleged criminal intercourse with her. She would remark that the girl "had the face and countenance" of Smeaton. The truth of this must be open to doubt with many remarking on the resemblance between Elizabeth and Henry. Cf., Alison Weir, *Children of England*, op. cit., pp. 13, 215, 343.

⁷ This debt of justice Elizabeth owed her half sister, she was not prepared to repay in the exercise of mercy towards her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots some 33 years later.

Consistent with this attitude to her misguided relations, Mary was diligent in ensuring that her judges administer true justice, reflecting in this the values of the realm's last great judge, the Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More executed by her father in 1534. Mary instructed her judges not to sit "as advocates for me, but as indifferent judges between me and my people."⁸

Historian, Alison Weir, reports that to her friends and servants, Mary was the soul of generosity.

"To the poor, she was compassionate and bountiful; once, whilst staying at the Archbishop of Canterbury's palace at Croydon, Surrey, she dressed up as a private gentlewoman and visited some humble homes incognito, speaking to the farmers and their wives with such 'plainness and affability' that they concluded she was one of the Queen's maids. Her maid-of-honour and friend, Jane Dormer, who often went with her on similar charitable missions elsewhere, remembered how, if there was a child in the house, the Queen would give the parents more money, advising them to live thriftily and in the fear of God."⁹

Under the poisonous influence of Protestantism, history has characterised Mary Tudor as an evil woman, one who worked great harm in the English realm. That is a lie. Elizabeth did far more harm to the English people than Mary ever did. History is written by the victors and Protestantism was eventually victorious. While the one is damned as 'Bloody Mary', the other is praised as 'Good Queen Bess'.

Mary knew the Protestant virus and its harm. She had suffered from it for almost twenty years. The draconian regime she was to endorse, burning at the stake, was designed to remove the virus from the realm. It appals the modern mind but it was accepted at the time as the fit penalty for the most virulent form of treason in the realm, heresy. The kingdom had flourished for almost 900 years in the peace and order instituted by the Catholic Church. Protestantism betrayed with a pretence of religion, the allegiance of the realm to Christ and His Church. It was no fault of Mary's that by the time she came to employ them, the means she chose to rid the realm of this evil were no longer effective.

Catholic Splendour Revived

Mary restored the choir of the Chapel Royal and Mass was said there daily from 8th August 1553. There was a moment, an apogee, of bliss in Mary's reign at the close of the year 1554 when all she was seeking to achieve in her marriage and the restoration of the realm to the Catholic faith seemed to be in train. She was convinced she was pregnant.

"The success of her Counter-Reformation, together with her advancing pregnancy, meant that the Christmas of 1554 was one of the happiest of Mary's life. There were splendid celebrations at court culminating in a moving service in the Chapel Royal, in which the King's choristers joined the Queen's to create an angelic sound. And in

⁸ Quotation related by Alison Weir in *Children of England*, op. cit., pp. 197-8.

⁹ *Children of England*, op. cit., p. 199.

honour of the coming heir, the great Thomas Tallis composed a new Mass entitled 'Unto us a child is born', which may have been sung on this occasion."¹⁰

It is possible, too, that this was the occasion when Tallis's monumental forty part motet *Spem in alium* was first performed. There is much debate today about the time of its writing and the weight of reason seems to favour the reign of Catholic Mary over that of Protestant Elizabeth. The words to which Tallis set the music are taken from a Responsory in the ancient Sarum rite of Mass drawn from the Book of *Judith*:

Spem in alium numquam habui praeter in te Deus Israel qui irascéris et propitius eris et omnia peccata hominum in tribulatione dimittis. Domine Deus Creator coeli et terrae respice humilitatem nostram.

The words reflect the lively faith of the Queen whom court iconographers may have compared to the Jewish heroine.¹¹ The motet certainly creates in the minds of its hearers today an impression of the angelic: it would have done no less in 1554. The work calls for eight choirs each of five voices and the presence of two such sets of choristers would certainly have provided Tallis with the necessary instruments for its performance.¹² In any event, music lover that she was, the glory of this event in the Chapel Royal must have served to console Mary in the sorrows to come.

Her Problem

Mary had spent most of her adult life in quiet obscurity in the country. Her profligate father had ignored the obligations he owed his daughter both as father and king. He had spurned her; he had purported to bastardise her. He had done worse: he had compelled her, through fear, to acknowledge in writing that he was head of the Catholic Church in England; to acknowledge that she rejected "the Bishop of Rome's pretended authority", and to accept "that the marriage heretofore made between his Majesty and my mother... was by God's law and man's incestuous and unlawful."¹³ Her biographer, Hilda Prescott, provides this telling summary of the profound effects of this submission upon Mary:

"The only thing that could mend for her that which she had broken was the absolution that the Pope could give; the Pope who, for her, spoke as the very mouthpiece of God. She begged Chapuys [the Spanish ambassador] to write for her, since she could not write herself, and ask for a secret absolution.

"But, though she might get the absolution and lay it as a balm upon her shrinking soul, the scar of her own surrender remained. Fisher, More, the Carthusian monks had died, martyred as surely as ever men were martyred. But she, in a fit of amazed panic, had been false to her mother and to her mother's Church. She knew what she was doing when she made her surrender. I believe that she never forgot it, and that in every crisis of her life afterwards she remembered it, and in the shadow of that memory, made her decision. She never could, now or later, weigh reason of state against reason of state; she could only try, groping and fumbling, to find out what was right for her to do, as a single human soul, like any other, before God's judgement seat, and then to do it, regardless of danger, regardless of wisdom, deaf to

¹⁰ *Children of England*, op. cit., pp. 294-5.

¹¹ Cf. the author's article, *Spem in Alium*, at http://www.superflumina.org/spem_in_alium.html and *The Story of Spem in alium*, by George Steel at <http://www.andante.com/article/article.cfm?id=16297>

¹² Even today it is necessary for large choirs to combine to provide the necessary vocal parts.

¹³ Cf. H.F.M. Prescott, *Mary Tudor, The Spanish Tudor*, 1940; my copy, Phoenix Paperback edition of the 1952 revised edition, 2003, p. 100.

argument or persuasion, not daring to compromise or turn back, because once in her life she had known what was right, and had not done it.”¹⁴

Mary was not like her Tudor forbears, or her successor, Elizabeth, a monarch who made a virtue of expediency. She was incapable of subtlety or the ability to dissemble. She ruled according to the dictates of her conscience. This could make her formidable because she was obstinate and would insist on carrying out what she believed to be her duty. Deprived of the necessary education in statecraft, Mary had little to prepare her for queenship. She lacked political experience and understanding. Had her father never betrayed her, she would not have lacked proper formation. Nor would she have lacked counsellors of integrity. The influence for good of men of principle like John Cardinal Fisher and Sir Thomas More must have produced within the realm in men formed after their example for *bonum est sui diffusivum*¹⁵. But her father had murdered them. Much that posterity has sought to lay at Mary’s door should be placed at that of her frightful father.

Mary was 37 when she became Queen of England, close to the end of the period when she might hope to conceive a child. She knew nothing of men, nothing of dalliance or coquetry, nothing of salacious behaviour.¹⁶ If she married she would move perforce into a world of emotional disturbance, for good or ill. She was counselled not to marry or, if she must, to marry an Englishman.

It was chiefly the craving for a mentor and guide which drove her to follow the advice of her cousin, the Emperor Charles V, and accept the proposal of Phillip II, King of Spain, as her spouse. In her defence, Charles had been her protector and support for twenty years and she was accustomed to rely on him in preference to advisers in England where there was treachery everywhere. American historian, Warren H Carroll, decries the view of the majority of historians that her marriage to Phillip was an unmitigated disaster¹⁷ but the facts tell against him. It *was* a disaster. Before she married she exercised control of her realm, in a measure weak, but nonetheless control. That control was compromised with her marriage. She was torn, as a wise counsellor could have warned her she would be, between loyalty to the English people and loyalty to her husband whose first interest was to the native land of which he was king. Indeed, a wise counsellor *did* warn her. Her Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner.

Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, had been in the Tower since the beginning of Edward’s reign because of his resistance to Somerset’s religious reforms. He was a faithful Catholic but he had compromised himself during Henry’s reign. He had been active in the moves to annul Henry’s marriage and had supported the King’s claim to supremacy, conduct of which he was to repent publicly during Mary’s reign.

¹⁴ *Mary Tudor, The Spanish Tudor*, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁵ Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2.

¹⁶ She overheard the flatterer of one of her maids use the term ‘whore’ in the course of badinage. Thinking it harmless, she used the term herself until the maid in great embarrassment, disabused her ignorance.

¹⁷ *The Cleaving of Christendom*, (A History of Christendom, vol. 4), Front Royal Virginia, 2000, p.237

To his great credit, he had defended Catholic orthodoxy against the Protestant incursions which began to afflict the Church during Henry's reign. He had endeavoured to impugn Cranmer with a charge of heresy and, but for the King's intervention, would have succeeded. Mary appointed Gardiner her Lord Chancellor and head of her Council. When the marriage was mooted he addressed Mary:

"What will the people say? They will never stomach a foreigner who will make promises that he cannot keep."

But her stubbornness would permit her no compromise.

"My mind is made up, and if you, my Lord Chancellor, prefer the will of the people to my wishes, then you are not keeping your promises."¹⁸

Her Tragedy

Phillip was 11 years Mary's junior. He had married Maria of Portugal, his cousin, in 1543 and their son, Don Carlos, early manifested the marks of intellectual disorder so characteristic of incestuous royal marriages.¹⁹ Maria died in 1545. Mary was aware that Phillip had engaged in affairs with other women yet allowed herself to be persuaded by her uncle to the marriage. The idea having taken fire, she thought herself in love with Phillip even though she had never met him. The conception seems to have become a reality upon their marriage when Mary became devoted to him. Like most women in love, she felt that she could turn him from his previous course. The affection on Phillip's side, however, was contrived and formal. For both their sakes it was imperative that she conceive and it was this drive, perhaps, that convinced Mary soon after their marriage that she was pregnant. Perhaps she realised subconsciously that her hold on Phillip depended on her ability to produce an heir. She made the mistake of announcing the belief of her alleged pregnancy publicly in September 1544. Her hopes were to prove false.

By August 1555, Phillip, having awaited in vain the delivery of an heir, left England for the continent where he mixed the performance of the duties of his other offices with dalliance with other women. He left Mary just when she needed his strength and guidance the most and she felt the abandonment deeply. Though she maintained composure in public, when she was alone she appeared as one stricken with grief. An unhappy love affair can interfere with the performance of the most basic duties in life and she had a whole realm to rule. So did Mary come to share in her mother's misfortune. As "the oak" on which Catherine had lent had "bended and broke", so did that on which Mary sought support.

Pope Julius III had died in March 1555 to be replaced, after the brief reign of Marcellus II, by the unstable Paul IV. Phillip's departure for the continent was followed in September 1555 by appalling weather which produced "the greatest rain and floods that ever was seen in England". The harvest had been poor and the damage occasioned to farming and to trade was immense. Then, in October, Phillip

¹⁸ Cf. *Children of England*, op. cit., p. 225.

¹⁹ Each of such marriages required a dispensation from the Pope because the Church forbade, for the best of reasons, marriage within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. A more rigorous consideration of applications for dispensation in the many royal marriages might have changed the course of European history for the better.

signalled that his removal from England was likely to be permanent by withdrawing further staff. In his correspondence with Mary he began to use his claim to be crowned King of England as a bargaining chip against his return. By December, the last of Phillip's retainers had left England. Gardiner's advice against the Spanish marriage, was proving to have been prophetic.

After more than 20 years of negligence on the part of the Popes over the appointment of Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, Paul IV finally excommunicated him in December 1555.²⁰ The Pope nominated Reginald Cardinal Pole as the new Primate of England. Pole was related to the Queen (her grandmother, Elizabeth (the wife of Henry VII), had been cousin to his mother, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury). The Poles had suffered greatly at the hands of Henry VIII because of their refusal to accept his claims of headship of the Church in England. Margaret was executed by Henry in May 1541 on the flimsiest pretext after imprisonment and great suffering.²¹ Reginald Pole had been appointed a Cardinal Deacon by Pope Paul III on 15th January 1537 but had never been ordained a priest. Indeed, at the time of his appointment by the Pope as Archbishop of Canterbury, in January 1556, he was still not a priest and was not ordained until two days prior to his consecration. Cranmer was burned at the stake on 21st March 1556 and Pole consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury the following day. He was the last Catholic to hold that office.

Their hopes of an heir having been raised by expectations which had come to nothing, the English people began to lose respect for the Queen. There was another factor: the people were divided in their religious allegiance. The slow poison of Protestantism, infecting the realm for more than 20 years, had undermined the native Catholicism. Many now began to object to the persecutions she had initiated against the Protestants.²² Mary required the exercise of great prudence and moderation under the influence of the Gift of the Holy Spirit called *Counsel* to deal with the Protestant problem. She was too naïve to see, too obstinate to follow, the advice that Gardiner and other members of her Council pressed upon her, counsel endorsed even by Phillip, her husband, to limit the persecution of Protestants. The obstinacy which had served to buttress her during more than 20 years of oppression now hardened, working harm in her and in the realm. For it was too late to hope to reverse by the ritualised burning at the stake the change in religion precipitated by the serial rapine of Church and country effected by her father. The England Mary had inherited was too deeply infected by the Protestant virus. England was a country divided.

²⁰ Clement VII had played into the hands of Henry VIII when he confirmed Henry's choice of Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533.

²¹ Henry had Margaret imprisoned in 1539 and she was held in the Tower for nearly two years. She was condemned without trial in May 1541. She refused to lay her head on the block and the headsman was forced to chase her to execute her. Reginald never hesitated to call himself the son of a martyr, a view which was confirmed when Pope Leo XIII beatified her in 1886.

²² The instrument for this was an Act of Parliament of November 1554 for the revival of the *Heresy Acts* of her predecessors, Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V, repealed during the reigns of her father and of her brother, Edward. The penal Acts came back into force from 20th January 1555.

On November 12th 1555, Gardiner died and Mary realised too late the extent to which she had relied upon him. A rising incited by yet another member of the Dudley family, Henry, was brewing against the Crown at the end of the year. The plot was discovered and a number of those allegedly involved were executed in 1556. A side effect of this treachery was the peril in which it placed the last English stronghold on the continent, the pale of Calais. In pursuit of his ambitions, Henry Dudley had connived with the French and kept the French king, Henri II, informed of the state of Calais' weakened ability to resist a siege. On New Year's Day 1558, with manoeuvrability allowed them by frozen marshes, the French army began an attack. A week later Calais was lost after vigorous resistance when the Duke of Guise took the subsidiary town of Guisnes. The loss of Calais affected Mary remarkably and seemingly contributed to her early demise. On her deathbed she murmured that after she was dead and her body opened "you will find Phillip and Calais lying in my heart."

Mary became ill in June and languished throughout the months that followed. She may, in October, have contracted a form of influenza. Her ladies thought it was psychological rather than physical ailments which afflicted her. In any event, she died on 17th November 1558 during early morning Mass at the elevation of the Host. The event was significant for, on the Christmas Day following, her successor Elizabeth directed Bishop Owen Oglethorpe, Bishop of Carlisle, not to elevate the Host after the Consecration. He refused, rightly putting his duty to God before that to his Queen and Elizabeth walked out of the church. Three weeks later at the Mass that followed her coronation, the newly anointed Queen absented herself from the body of the church for the Consecration and did not receive Communion.

Cardinal Pole died twelve hours after Mary. With their joint passing all hopes of the restitution of the Catholic faith in England were effectively extinguished.

Without the burden of a husband who proved unfaithful and inattentive, Mary could have better addressed the great problems presented by her realm. Had she followed Gardiner's advice she would never have suffered the evils that befell her. Her popular memory would have been substantially different, her achievements greater. She would undoubtedly have lived longer and (if for no other reason) have exercised a more lasting influence upon her people. She would have suppressed Elizabeth's claims to the throne more effectively. She would, while the issue was still in the balance, have secured a stronger beachhead for the return of the Catholic cause. Without the distraction of constantly defeated expectation of emotional and psychological support, she might have grown in self reliance, have been confirmed in the strength she had already developed. She might have grown in wisdom; and understood, at last, the extent of the Protestant infection and how to combat it prudently and effectively.

Michael Baker

29th December 2007 — *St Thomas a'Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*