

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE MARIAN REACTION 1553-1558*

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The reign of Queen Mary has always posed a dilemma for historians of Tudor England. The actions of Mary herself, the activities of her Privy Council, and the legislation of her parliaments appear as an aberration from the accepted course of English national development.¹ The widespread acceptance of her Roman Catholic restoration and the apparent ease with which she achieved this goal have masked both the nature and the extent of the opposition which she encountered.

Those historians who have discussed the opposition roused by Mary's policies have usually explained the difficulties which her religious program encountered in terms of a combination of property interest and nationalism. They have viewed the English ruling class as essentially disinterested in religion and concerned only with the maintenance of rights to property which had become secularized as a result of the dissolution of Catholic religious life in the preceding two decades. Alternatively, they have concentrated on Mary's Spanish heritage and Hapsburg connection and have ascribed the opposition to her as a consequence of the growing nationalism and the anti-Spanish phobia which developed during the second half of the sixteenth century. Thus the opposition to the

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¹Perhaps for this reason Mary has received less attention than her father and her sister—or even her brother. She has been the subject of several biographies, the best of which is H. F. M. Prescott, *A Spanish Tudor: The Life of Bloody Mary* (New York, 1970). Much interesting information is contained in E. Harris Harbison, *Rival Ambassadors at the Court of Queen Mary* (Princeton, 1940). The most recent and the best account of her reign is contained in David Michael Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England 1553-1558* (London, 1979). A sympathetic Catholic account is that of Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, 3 vols. (New York, 1963).

Marian religious restoration has traditionally been explained in terms of either materialism or nationalism.²

This explanation appeared credible to historians working in the secular milieu of the past two centuries. Indeed, for them, an understanding of the religious enthusiasm of the Reformation era proved elusive. They lacked both empathy for deep religious commitment and contemporary examples of religious fervor which could serve as models for a religious explanation of the puzzling pattern of events in the sixteenth century. However, present-day awareness of the ideological commitment displayed by communists and the religious fervor revealed in the Islamic resurgence compels a re-examination of the Catholic restoration occurring during the period 1553-1558 with a new sensitivity to the possible role of Protestant commitment during the reign of Queen Mary.³

This article will attempt a fresh analysis of the reactions within the House of Commons to the policies of Queen Mary. It will assess the extent to which the actions of the Commons reflected opposition to the Marian program, and will offer a tentative explanation for the apparent ambiguity of the Commons towards the Catholic restoration.

1. The Historical Setting and the Marian Parliaments

Although Henry VIII had broken with the papacy in 1534 and established a national Church of England, he had succeeded in maintaining the basic structure of Catholic doctrine intact. This doctrinal affinity with Catholicism was replaced, during the reign of Edward VI, by a decidedly Protestant theology and liturgy. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer masterminded this transformation with

²See, e.g., A. F. Pollard, *The History of England: From the Accession of Edward VI to the Death of Elizabeth 1547-1603* (London, 1934), pp. 115, 132; A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York, 1964), pp. 260, 263; and Loades, p. 271. Jennifer Loach, the most recent historian of the Marian Parliaments, also favors this explanation. See "Conservatism and Consent in Parliaments, 1547-59," in Robert L. Tittler and Jennifer Loach, eds., *The Mid-Tudor Polity c. 1540-1560* (Totowa, N.J., 1980), pp. 9-28.

³Only J. E. Neale, among recent historians, has recognized the significance of religion during this period. "The Reformation," he points out, "forced people to think critically on issues of transcendent importance to their consciences" (*Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments 1559-1581* [New York, 1966], p. 21).

the support of the Dukes of Somerset and Northumberland.⁴

Mary had refused to participate personally in the Protestant services during the reign of Edward. Once accepted as monarch, she determined to restore not only the doctrinal orthodoxy of her father but also the papal supremacy which had been abolished twenty years earlier. Unfortunately for Mary, the changes wrought during the reign of Henry VIII and Edward VI had been accomplished through parliament. Much as she might wish otherwise, Mary knew that only parliament could restore what parliament had changed.

The elections for Mary's first House of Commons took place in late September and the parliament opened on October 5, 1553. The Privy Council, led by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and with the full approval of the Queen, planned to resolve the religious crisis by repealing "en bloc all laws made, since 1529, with reference to religion."⁵ The Commons refused to accept this bill, and after a brief prorogation the Council adopted a different strategy, introducing "The Bill to repeal divers Acts, touching Divine Service, and the Marriage of Priests, etc., made in the time of King Edward the Sixth."⁶ Heated debate must have resulted from the introduction of this measure, for on three occasions the *Commons Journal* records "Arguments upon The Bill of Repeal of the Nine Statutes."⁷ The opponents managed to force a division—a most unusual occurrence in early Tudor Parliaments.⁸ Although the bill finally passed by a wide margin (270 votes to 80),⁹ the Queen herself reported that this had only been accomplished after "keen discussion and debate and

⁴The most recent treatment of the break with Rome and the establishment of Protestantism in England is in G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977). Standard accounts, from differing viewpoints, are in Dickens, in Hughes, and in T. M. Parker, *The English Reformation to 1558* (London, 1950).

⁵Hughes, 2: 200.

⁶*Journal of the House of Commons* (London, 1903), 1: 29.

⁷*Ibid.* The Act is in Alexander Luders, et al., eds., *The Statutes of the Realm* (London, 1819), 4: 202.

⁸Stanford E. Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII 1536-1547* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 222, mentions a division in the last parliament of Henry VIII (1545), and describes it as "a procedure that was still quite unusual."

⁹James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England* (London, 1913), 4: 123.

an immensity of hard work on the part of her Catholics."¹⁰ Thus the major, indeed the only, religious legislation passed by Mary's first parliament was the repeal of the Edwardian religious innovation. The nation stood where it had when Henry VIII died.

In other respects, Mary and her more conservative councillors had been sorely disappointed by this parliament. Not only had the House of Commons refused to repeal her father's post-1529 religious legislation, but the members had grounded Mary's legitimacy upon parliamentary statute rather than upon papal prerogative. Also, they had refused to attach penalties to nonattendance at Mass, refused to restore the bishopric of Durham, clearly indicated their opposition to the restoration of abbey and chantry lands, and left the question of papal supremacy open for debate.¹¹ For Mary herself the Commons introduced a note of personal discord when a deputation waited upon her and urged her to marry an Englishman rather than a foreigner. This first parliament had proved, from the viewpoint of the government, a rather frustrating experience.

Mary's second parliament began on April 2, 1554. In his opening oration Gardiner, in his capacity as Lord Chancellor, outlined the government's program involving "Corroboration of true Religion, and touching the Queen's Highness most noble Marriage."¹² The failure of Wyatt's rebellion in the previous February ensured a minimum of opposition in parliament to the bill authorizing the royal marriage with Philip. Nevertheless, the Commons took care to circumscribe "Philip's powers with every possible safeguard," particularly by limiting his role in English affairs to the life of the Queen or during a regency, and by guarding against the employment of Spaniards in English affairs.¹³

Gardiner, however, failed to achieve his goals with regard to the religious settlement. Several bills were introduced into the Commons including "The Bill to revive certain Statutes repealed touching Heresies and Lollardies," "The Bill to revive the Statute of Six Articles," "The Bill for Avoiding of erroneous Opinions in Books

¹⁰The Queen to Pole, quoted in John Lingard, *A History of England from the First Invasion by the Romans to the Revolution of 1688* (London, 1823), 5: 406, n. 2.

¹¹See Pollard, p. 103.

¹²*Commons Journal* 1: 33.

¹³Elton, p. 381.

containing Heresies," and "The Bill to avoid Pensions of Married Priests."¹⁴ Only the first, after considerable debate, passed the House of Commons before being defeated in the Lords. The others were either withdrawn or failed to gain the assent of the Commons prior to the dissolution of this parliament.

The most intense tussle in the Commons during this parliament appears to have occurred over the bill to restore the bishopric of Durham. This proposal had been rejected by the Commons in the previous parliament and again caused considerable debate before being passed on a division with 201 votes in favor, and 120 against.¹⁵ Again it had been a very frustrating parliament from Mary's viewpoint—though this time the critical vote had come in the Lords, who had rejected the attempt to revive the medieval heresy laws, rather than in the Commons. The Queen blamed William Paget, the chief opponent of Gardiner in her government, for this reversal, and she immediately dissolved the parliament.¹⁶

By the time Mary met her third parliament her marriage to Philip had been consummated, and she looked forward with anticipation to the reunion of her realm with Rome. This parliament, which sat from November 12, 1554, to January 16, 1555, proved to be amenable to her wishes. On November 19, a bill was introduced into the Commons to repeal the attainder of Cardinal Pole, the papal legate authorized to end the schism between England and the papacy.¹⁷ The bill passed rapidly through all stages, thus clearing the way for Pole to return to his native England. Thereafter, the reconciliation with Rome proceeded smoothly and rapidly.

During three successive meetings of parliament—on November 28, 29, and 30—the two houses heard Pole present his plea for reconciliation, discussed an appropriate petition, presented it, and were absolved from the ecclesiastical censures incurred because of schism.¹⁸ There had been almost no opposition to these procedures

¹⁴*Commons Journal* 1: 33, 34, 35.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1: 34; cf. Loades, p. 169.

¹⁶Elton, p. 381. Elton suggests that Paget's motive was political caution rather than Protestant sympathy.

¹⁷*Commons Journal* 1: 37. Pole had been living in exile in Italy since the break between Henry VIII and Rome in 1534.

¹⁸Hughes, 2: 225.

in parliament. "Suddenly," in the words of one recent historian, "it seemed that there were more, and more enthusiastic, Catholics in England than had ever been suspected."¹⁹ The Council introduced a bill to embody this reunion on Wednesday, December 26, 1554. The clerk of the Commons described it simply as "The Bill for Repeal of Acts touching the Supremacy etc." But, after the second reading, the House devoted a full day to discussing the implications of this measure. When it came up for third reading the clerk described it as "The great Bill touching the Repeal of Acts against the See of Rome etc. Assurance of Abbey Lands, and Chauntry lands."²⁰ This Act of Repeal reversed, as far as could be done, the religious legislation of the reign of Henry VIII.

Perhaps the most important feature of the Act is the manner in which, even while making submission to the papacy, parliament avoided unconditional surrender. The Act requested Pole, in his capacity as papal legate, to "confirm ecclesiastical foundations . . . made since the schism, marriages contracted without papal dispensations ordinarily required for validity, ecclesiastical preferments granted, and judgments of ecclesiastical courts made during the times of schism and, finally, to secure to the present possessors all alienated church lands."²¹ In addition, the Act made perfectly clear that neither the papacy nor the bishops were to have any authority not held prior to the schism.

One further momentous act also passed during this session. Both Lords and Commons agreed, at last, to a revival of the medieval heresy laws in a bill which rapidly passed the Commons after successive readings on December 12, 13, and 14, 1554.²² Whereas a similar bill had aroused a storm of opposition in the Commons during Mary's second parliament, on this occasion the bill encountered almost no opposition at all.

Mary summoned her fourth parliament later that same year. Before it met on October 21, 1555, Philip had returned to the Continent (in September, 1555) to assume the responsibilities abdicated

¹⁹Loades, p. 326.

²⁰*Commons Journal* 1: 40. The following day the clerk recorded that "A Proviso touching Parsonage Tythes being in Laymens Hands, annexed to Bill of Repeals." Ibid.

²¹Parker, pp. 163, 164. The Act is printed in *Statutes of the Realm*, 4: 246-254.

²²*Commons Journal* 1: 39.

by his father, Charles V. The Protestant persecution, which had begun in the spring following the revival of the heresy laws, claimed the lives of Ridley and Latimer at Oxford just five days prior to the opening of parliament. The House of Commons elected on this occasion proved the most refractory and obstreperous of Mary's reign.

The greatest confrontation during this session of parliament occurred over issues which straddled both property and religion. Mary planned to relinquish her income from firstfruits and tenths in favor of the church.²³ Cardinal Pole felt precluded from using this income until the transfer had been specifically authorized by the Commons. The Queen, whose conscience was troubled by her failure to divest herself of clerical income, met with a deputation of fifty members of the Commons on November 20, 1555, in an attempt to gain support for this measure. Nevertheless, the clerk noted dryly, after the second reading of the bill to effect this transfer, "Long Arguments upon the Bill of First-fruits and tenths."²⁴

As the bill had already passed the Lords, it was referred to a joint committee of both houses. The committee reported the bill back to the Commons on the morning of December 3, whereupon,

after great dispute and contention in the Lower House, from daybreak, when they met, until 3 p.m., during which time the doors were closed, no one being allowed egress, either to eat or for any other purpose; at length, this evening, the bill was carried by 183 ayes against 120 noes.²⁵

Although the Council gained the victory by this stratagem, the opposition members learned well. They later used a similar tactic to defeat a strongly backed government measure which would have expropriated the property of religious refugees during their exile.²⁶ Both of these bills had been passed unanimously in the Lords, and

²³Firstfruits and tenths had formed part of the customary income of the church during the medieval period. The crown had become the beneficiary of the income following the establishment of the royal supremacy.

²⁴*Commons Journal* 1: 45.

²⁵Rawdon Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian* (London, 1877), 6/1: 270. *Commons Journal* 1: 46, gives the division figures as 193 in favor and 126 against. It also indicates that seven other bills had been read prior to the debate on this one.

²⁶*Commons Journal* 1: 46.

the controversy in the Commons apparently reflected the growing concern in that House over government policy.

Mary's fifth parliament met on January 20, 1558. By this time England had joined Spain in its war against France, and financial and military items dominated the governmental legislation introduced into the Commons. Such religious legislation as was introduced concerned questions of ecclesiastical sanctuary, the forging of monastic seals, the confirmation of certain bishoprics to their present holders, and the withdrawal of benefit of clergy from those involved as accessories in homicide. Of these, only the last one passed because, in the words of a recent historian, "the council had difficulty in getting such bills through."²⁷ Nevertheless, the government apparently considered this parliament the most satisfactory of the reign; certainly it was the only one prorogued rather than dissolved at the end of its session. The second session assembled on November 5, 1558, but the death of the Queen on November 17 terminated its work.²⁸

This brief survey of the relationship between Queen Mary's administration and her Houses of Commons indicates two things. First, Mary proved unable to get the Commons to agree to the entire legislative program which she and her Privy Council desired. Second, even in those matters where the Commons ultimately did legislate the Marian program, they did so only after procrastination and the alteration of many of the details of that program.²⁹ Before we discuss the reasons for this opposition, we should note three unusual incidents which occurred during Mary's parliaments.

2. *Three Unusual Incidents During Mary's Parliaments*

The first of these three incidents occurred during the third Marian parliament (November 12, 1554, to January 16, 1555),

²⁷Loades, p. 450.

²⁸*Commons Journal* 1: 51, 52.

²⁹Neale, p. 27, perceptively comments, "The opposition in Mary's reign had been Protestant, or inclined, for political and other reasons, to sympathize with Protestants. A Protestant programme being out of the question, its role was that of mere opposition: to modify or defeat government measures."

which restored the papal jurisdiction in England. The bill embodying this restoration was introduced in the House of Commons on December 27, passed all stages by January 4, 1555, and was sent immediately to the House of Lords. Apparently a number of members were sufficiently disturbed by this legislation to depart to their homes. When the House was called on Friday, January 11, so few members were present that it was decided to call the House again on the following Monday. Despite the advance notice, only 193 members were present on that date—i.e., over half were absent, 106 without license and hence in violation of the act of 1515 which specifically forbade unlicensed departure prior to the end of a parliamentary session.³⁰

Sir Edward Coke, writing within three generations of the event, records the names of thirty-three members who departed, "contrary to the kings inhibition in the beginning of the parliament."³¹ Although a recent historian has concluded that "indignation at being kept in London over Christmas and anxiety to return home were probably the true causes of their behavior," this cannot be proven.³² While this may have been true of some, there were undoubtedly others of whom it was not true—at least Sir Edward Coke's thirty-three who absented themselves for political reasons.

The second incident occurred during Queen Mary's fourth parliament (October 21 to December 9, 1555). In an attempt to limit the growing number of gentry in the House of Commons, the Council introduced a proposal to restore "the ancient method and useage" whereby none should be elected save those actually resident in the counties, cities and boroughs which returned them. This proposal,

seems to have been rejected, because to return to the ancient order of things, the opposition insisted on simultaneously prohibiting the election of any stipendiary, pensioner, or official or of any person deriving

³⁰*Commons Journal* 1: 41; Loades, p. 272. See 6 Henry VIII, cap. 16.

³¹*The Fourth Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England concerning the Jurisdiction of the Courts* (London, 1797), p. 16.

³²Jennifer Loach, "Opposition to the Crown in Parliament, 1553-1558" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1974), p. 141. The quotation itself is from Loades, p. 272.

profit in any other way from the King and the Royal Council, and being dependent on them; so that all the members elected, being devoid of any apprehension for their private interests may more freely advocate those of the community.³³

The members of the Council and their supporters ensured the rejection of this amendment, whereupon the original proposal was thrown out.

Giovanni Michiel, the Venetian ambassador to England, provides the only account of this incident. Some historians have discounted his story because of that fact. However, there appear to be two reasons for considering it seriously. First, where Michiel's information can be checked against other sources, he maintains a high level of accuracy and hence appears to have had reliable informants and thus to be a credible witness. Second, if the story were not correct, where would it have come from? Such sophisticated opposition tactics are unknown elsewhere in sixteenth-century parliamentary history. The possibility of this story being pure fabrication therefore appears to be remote.³⁴

The third significant instance of opposition occurred later in this same parliament. When the councillors realized that a government bill involving the surrender, by the crown, of firstfruits and tenths to the church was in trouble, they arranged, as noted earlier, for the doors of the Commons to be locked and refused to allow anyone to leave until the measure passed. Two days later, on December 6, 1555, following the third reading of a bill authorizing the confiscation of the property of the Marian exiles, those who opposed the measure used the same tactic. Sir Anthony Kingston, supported by a number of his colleagues, in order to prevent delay and the opportunity for official pressure, locked the door and proclaimed that he wanted an immediate vote. This stratagem resulted in the defeat of the bill, the dissolution of the parliament, and the imprisonment of Kingston and his immediate supporters.³⁵

³³Giovanni Michiel, Venetian Ambassador in England, to the Doge and Senate; in *Calendar of State Papers: Venetian*, 6/1: 252.

³⁴Cf. Neale, p. 26.

³⁵*Commons Journal* 1: 47; *Calendar of State Papers: Venetian*, 6/1: 275, 283; Pollard, p. 147.

Some historians have linked the opposition to this bill with the whole question of property rights which assumed such importance during Mary's reign.³⁶ But this is only part of the problem. The majority of the Marian exiles were members of the gentry, who depended upon income from their lands to enable them to live abroad. The successful passage of this bill would have forced them either to return to England to face the hazard of the heresy laws or to live abroad in penury. Neither alternative proved acceptable to those who disliked the Marian program.³⁷

3. *Response to the Marian Religious Program—Religious or Secular?*

The response to the Marian religious program evinced by the different Houses of Commons during the reign of Queen Mary indicates that although Mary and her Council did succeed in restoring Roman Catholicism, both the timing and the extent of that restoration were influenced by the House of Commons. Mary wanted immediate reconciliation with Rome, but her first Commons foiled this plan and forced her to adopt a two-step approach to the religious issue. Not until her third parliament did Mary achieve this supreme goal of her reign. In addition, those opposed to the policies of Queen Mary fought a delaying action in the House which frustrated or amended details of the Marian program. As a result, although Mary did succeed in having Roman Catholicism restored as the official

³⁶Loades, p. 273. Loach, *The Mid-Tudor Polity 1540-1560*, p. 15, has claimed that "hostility to the exiles bill could be based on entirely secular considerations" and has drawn an analogy with the act of 1571, which permitted confiscation of the property of Catholic exiles; she points out that the bill "also ran into difficulties and was passed only after various amendments and with the addition of a number of clauses safeguarding the interests of the exiles' families and descendants." However, the Elizabethan bill passed; the Marian one did not. Furthermore, the forceful nature of the action taken to prevent passage indicates stronger resentment than is usual in protecting the property of third parties.

³⁷Christian Garrett, *The Marian Exiles: A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1938), suggests that the Exiles formed part of an organized attempt to preserve English Protestantism masterminded by some of the leading Protestants, including William Cecil. If this thesis is accurate, then the opposition in the House of Commons certainly reflected more than concern over property rights. Even if the thesis is not correct, the publication nevertheless provides evidence indicative of concern by many in the ruling class for the Marian exiles. See especially, pp. 1-29.

church in England, the restoration proved neither as firmly grounded nor as all-pervasive as Mary and her Catholic advisors had hoped.

Loades, after examining the evidence, has concluded that there is, in fact, "no evidence to support the notion of a continuous and organized opposition in the Marian parliaments, either of a political or religious nature."³⁸

This conclusion is correct as Loades has stated it. The idea of a "continuous and organized" opposition in parliament to the royal government would have been inconsistent with sixteenth-century political thought. Nevertheless, the individual and collective interests of those who opposed all or parts of the Marian religious program led to the coalescing of opposition groups in every parliament. The size and significance of these groups varied from one House of Commons to another, and they lacked continuity, but each House contained such a group. Opposition proved most vocal and significant in the first and fourth parliaments of Mary's reign, least important in the third and fifth. Taken as a whole, the Commons in Mary's parliaments proved more troublesome and difficult to manage than had previously been the case in the sixteenth century.³⁹

Thus, an examination of the legislative actions of the Commons during the period 1553-1558 reveals significant opposition in the Commons to a considerable proportion of the Marian religious program. It remains to consider whether this opposition arose from religious or material interests. A recent historian of Mary's reign claims, "Virtually every issue that came to a contest or a vote was a matter of property rights or financial provision." This is true—but only because the sentence is prefaced with "virtually".⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is the kind of facile truism which can be misleading. For instance, the bill for the release of firstfruits and tenths, which caused such trouble in the fourth parliament, did have financial overtones. But it would not have directly affected the financial situation of the individual members of the Commons, for it concerned

³⁸Loades, p. 271.

³⁹The only possible exception is the parliament of 1523, which proved unusually intractable over questions of taxation. See Elton, pp. 88-91.

⁴⁰Loades, p. 271. There were, of course, exceptions to this generalization. Those members of the House of Commons opposed to the repeal of the Edwardian religious legislation forced a vote in the House on that issue during Mary's first parliament.

only rights held by the crown. Its main result, undoubtedly, would have been to strengthen the restored Catholic Church. Thus, it would appear reasonable to assume that opposition came as much from reluctance to strengthen the Catholic Church as from fear of increased taxes to compensate the royal exchequer for lost income.

Again, the opposition to the bill to confiscate, temporarily, the property of the religious exiles certainly violated traditional views of property rights. Yet the bill safeguarded the rights of heirs and, in fact, gave the refugees ample time to return to England and thus save their property interests. But the results of passage would have been disastrous from the Protestant viewpoint. The reaction to this measure can more correctly be seen as part of the struggle to maintain a viable Protestant alternative.

A brief consideration of the situation in England during this period will explain why so much of the opposition to the Marian reaction was indirect rather than direct. The concept of the royal supremacy had been part of the English milieu for a generation by the time of Mary's accession. If as learned and influential a person as Archbishop Thomas Cranmer could have doubts about the virtue of individual opposition to the royal will in matters of religion, surely many of his contemporaries must have mirrored this conflict of conscience. Many, undoubtedly, chose to follow the royal lead even if that meant Catholic restoration. Furthermore, many of those who retained their Protestant belief were reluctant to oppose the royal will in matters of religion because of their background in the concept of the royal supremacy.⁴¹

Therefore, they needed an issue through which they could indirectly oppose the Catholic restoration and through which they could gain as much support as possible. Property rights proved to be just such an issue. And it became even more important after the restoration of Catholicism and the passage of the medieval heresy laws—for thereafter opposition to religious issues could be considered heresy, whereas opposition to the violation of property rights could not, and yet it could be used to achieve the same ends. Hence

⁴¹Cf. D. M. Loades's assertion in *JEH* 16 (1965): 63 that "the leaders of orthodox Protestantism, such as Cranmer, had always preached submission to the secular power, and remained substantially consistent when that power was turned against them."

it appears consistent with normal political behavior patterns to assume that while some opponents of the Marian religious program were concerned only with property issues, others were sufficiently astute to use the property issue to attempt to block, delay, or minimize the Catholic restoration in England.

In addition, the alliance with Spain, symbolized by Mary's marriage with Philip, threatened England with the worst features—from the Protestant viewpoint—of the Continental Catholic reaction to the Reformation. Englishmen had only to look across the channel to the Netherlands to be made aware of the religious intolerance of the Hapsburgs and the thoroughness with which they crushed any suspicion of heresy.⁴² This situation would be well known in England as a result of the numerous mercantile connections between the two countries and the large émigré church established in London during the reign of Edward VI. The Hapsburgs symbolized the Catholic opposition to Protestantism—and Philip was heir to the Hapsburg inheritance.

Consequently, opposition to the Spanish marriage and the Spanish intrusion into England can be seen to have resulted from the combination of Protestantism with nationalism. Again, opposition came both from those who feared that Spanish interests would predominate in the partnership and from those who saw Spain as the major threat to Protestantism. No Protestant person need fear a charge of heresy for opposition to the Marian government when cloaking that opposition in the guise and language of patriotism. Historians of Elizabethan England have long explained the virulent anti-Spanish attitude of that period in terms of English Protestantism. The anti-Spanish sentiment so obvious during Mary's reign would equally appear to be based upon the growing Protestant temper in England.

One of the least understood aspects of this period of English

⁴²Cf. Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands* (London, 1958), pp. 55-60. After referring to the edicts issued by Charles V, Geyl comments, "From the very first these edicts pronounced draconic punishments on all who were even remotely connected with heresy; every new one was more severe than the last, until in 1550 the limit of frightfulness was reached with the 'edict of blood' in which all loopholes were stopped and death was enacted for all trespasses." *Ibid.*, p. 55. This aspect of the opposition to the Spanish marriage is usually overlooked because of the insular perspective of many English historians.

history is the rapidity with which England was becoming a Protestant country. This change in religious climate had begun during the reign of Henry VIII and proceeded with increasing intensity until the death of Edward VI. During the hiatus caused by Mary's determination to restore Catholicism, the spread of Protestantism appeared to waiver and even recede. Yet, all the contemporary evidence available indicates that a large number—certainly a very strong and influential minority—continued to be sympathetic to Protestantism.

The strength of their opposition, in the House of Commons, to the Marian reaction has been minimized, because historians have concentrated upon measures which actually passed in Parliament and have ignored those which failed as well as the delay in, and alteration of, many which ultimately passed. Issues involving property rights and national interest were important factors in the development of opposition to the Marian regime, but these must not be allowed to obscure the significance of Protestantism in providing the matrix for this opposition. As William Cecil noted in his diary regarding Mary's fourth parliament:

21 October, 1555, Parliament assembled at Westminster. I participated at some risk. Notwithstanding my reluctance, I had been elected a member from Lincolnshire. Nevertheless, I spoke my mind freely and incurred some ill will. But it was better to obey God than man.⁴³

Thus spoke the authentic voice of conforming Protestantism. For William Cecil represented all those who, while believing in the authority of the monarch, yet struggled to preserve as much of the ecclesiastical changes of the previous two decades as possible. Their successes, though limited, permitted the rapid reestablishment of Protestantism following the accession of Elizabeth to the throne of England in 1558.

⁴³Quoted in Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1955), p. 110.