

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND TELESIS OF THE REFORMATION
AS REFLECTED PRIMARILY IN THE WRITINGS AND WORKS OF
DESIDERIUS ERASMUS AND MARTIN LUTHER

by

Ollie Eugene Thompson

A THESIS

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DESIDERIUS ERASMUS AND MARTIN LUTHER

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
Sam Houston State Teachers College
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

by

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Purpose

It was the purpose of this study to make an objective analysis of the existing social, ethnic and cultural conditions prior to, during and after the Reformation period, in Europe as a whole and England in general. It was further intended to evaluate and correlate the impact of the above mentioned conditions and the resultant social manifestations, changes and improvements directly and indirectly attributed to the writings and works of Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus.

Methods

The following method was used in obtaining data for this study: (1) reference books, translated works, articles and pamphlets were used as source information.

Findings

From the evidence presented in this study the following conclusions appear to be valid:

1. That the social implications of the Reformation exceeded the religious implications.
2. Literature played a tremendous part in creating "social awareness" throughout Europe. Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus were two of the most prominent writers of the period.

3. Europe during the Reformation period was extremely class-conscious.

4. Martin Luther believed in religious freedom and the right to express it. He considered the moral aspects of most issues.

5. Luther denied the infallibility of the pope and denied his jurisdiction in governmental and temporal matters.

6. Erasmus was unwilling to jeopardize his position as a scholar, or minimize his social prestige by aligning himself with Luther and the other "revolutionaries".

7. Erasmus was a humanist and Luther was a humanitarian.

8. The Catholic Church was oppressive in its dealings with its members. The church used the sale of indulgences to raise large sums of money. These were purchased mostly by the poor who could not afford the indulgences.

9. The establishment of "the absolute power of the monarch" occurred during the Reformation period, under the reign of King Henry VIII.

10. Basic changes occurred in the economy of England during the Reformation. Capitalism replaced the agrarian society with the advent of commerce and industry. The change in the economy resulted in money becoming the medium of exchange, replacing the "share".

11. Social, economic and political mores of long standing disappeared during the Reformation, being replaced by new theories and process that, for the most part, proved good for the countries.

12. New philosophies of education were introduced during the Reformation. Luther's philosophy was to educate so that the masses might be relieved of their oppressions. Erasmus's philosophy was to educate so that the students might be worthy leaders and teachers.

13. Erasmus and Luther were two of the first advocates of compulsory education. Luther believed the education of the children was the responsibility of the state. Erasmus believed the responsibility of education lay within the individual families; and the "tutor" system was the best way to educate children.

14. Erasmus was primarily responsible for the establishment of the fundamental philosophy of the English grammar school. Classical literature played an important role in the foundation of present-day English grammar school curricula.

Approved:

Supervising Professor

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Ollie Eugene Thompson

CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

In the preparation of this thesis the primary problem is to determine the social conditions of the Reformation non-inclusive of moral and spiritual issues of the times. While no clearcut view is available into many of these overlapping areas, this writer intends to attempt to divorce the moral and spiritual aspects of the Reformation from the social, ethnic and cultural aspects, and present the latter in such manner as to verify the ultimate changes or improvements resulting from the Reformation.

Purpose of the Study

It is the purpose of this study to make an objective analysis of the existing social, ethnic and cultural conditions prior to, during and after the Reformation period, in Europe as a whole and England in general. It is further intended to evaluate and correlate the impact of the above mentioned conditions and the resultant social manifestations, changes and improvements directly and indirectly attributed to the writings and works of Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited principally to the works of Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus. We will confine our-

selves to those works germane to the subject.

This study is limited in scope because of the sharply contradictory writings of the Catholic and Protestant approaches as to what constituted social, cultural and religious areas of the Reformation.

Methods of Investigation

The following method was used in obtaining data for this study: reference books, translated works, articles and pamphlets were used as source information.

Introduction to Erasmus and Luther

During the Reformation there were principally two great literary men who opposed each other on the major issues of the movement.

In order to understand the motivational forces behind these two intellectual powers, Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther, it is necessary to delve briefly into their lives, their philosophies, their prime values in life.

Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) was born in Rotterdam, Holland, to unwed parents who cared for him well until their early deaths, at which time he was cared for by guardians until the meager inheritance left him by his parents diminished. He attended several monastic or semi-monastic schools, where he received the best education available at the time.

Erasmus took the vows of a priest when he was about twenty-five years of age, but there are no indications that he ever served as a parish priest. He preferred the life of a religious scholar to that of the clergy. He enjoyed the independence of a scholar: the independence of country, religion, development of his intellect, and especially the freedom from routine.

Erasmus was offered, and rejected, numerous positions of distinction on the faculties of various universities. He declined these positions because of his aversion to a routine life, and his desire for unrestricted literary activities.

During the early and middle part of his life, he studied Latin diligently and wrote sparingly, but later he became a prolific writer on religious and literary subjects.

Erasmus never questioned the true doctrine of the Catholic church, the position of the pope as its head, nor, did he reflect hostility toward the church, but he desired to use his knowledge to purify and liberalize the doctrines of the church. He believed in altering the medieval traditions, not only in literature, but in social and ecclesiastical matters as well. He stressed the importance of using sound learning and applying it frankly and firmly in the administration of public and church affairs.

Erasmus refused to join any movements against the Catholic church that might endanger his position as a scholar. In his translation of the Bible he never questioned the position of the church in relation to the scriptures, but rather justified the church's position according to the scriptures.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was born in Eiseleben, Germany, to a lower middle class family; he was educated in the Mansfield Latin Grammar School and the University of Erfurt, where he received his bachelor's and master's degrees. He later received Bachelor of Bible and Doctorate of Theology degrees from Wittenberg.

Luther was raised in the strict religious atmosphere of the Roman Catholic Church and possessed a great fear of

the wrath of God in his early years. He was ordained to the Augustinian priesthood against the will of his father, and possibly to satisfy his own belief that this would assure the salvation of his soul.

Luther was a spiritually troubled young man and decided early in life that one's hope for salvation must rest in the forgiveness of sin. He became an ardent creative student of the Bible - both commentary and translation - while always searching for his own inward peace.

Early in his career he reflected radical views that were ultimately to be responsible for his Ninety-five theses. Most important of these views were: salvation was through the grace of God and predestined; he denied the absolute power of the pope; he believed man could commune with God only through Christ, and needed no other intermediary; he vehemently opposed the sale of indulgences for sins committed; and was opposed to the vows of celibacy necessary for the priesthood.

Luther was constantly striving to know the true meaning of the Scriptures and spent much of his life seeking consolation in them. Luther constantly strove to return the Word of God to the center of the religious experience from the periphery where it had been shoved by the clergy in their masses, and by many of the spiritual writers of the time.

Luther believed God was the center of the universe, the church the manifestor of His will, and man the guardian

and teacher of his fellowman. He refused to remain silent on any social or church issue he believed contrary to the Divine doctrine, and stood ready at all times to defend his beliefs before any secular or church group.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL SPHERES

Stratification and Population Changes

In England and neighboring countries in Europe, the emergence of a strong and ambitious class of townsmen under the patronage of territorial princes and kings was well formed by the year 1500. This tendency threatened to disturb the social stratification that was believed by most people of the time to have been ordained by God for eternity. This medieval conception that the clergy constituted the head, the nobility the arms, and the peasants the feet of the medieval body could not persist long in the face of the social, economic, and political changes which were disrupting the medieval way of life.¹ There was no place in this class for those people who felt no guilt of conscience about accumulating money by profiting from their fellowman's needs and using this wealth to gain social prestige and political power.

Changes in the population also had an important effect upon the social stratification in Europe. There was a decline in the number of nobles but a substantial increase in the townsmen and peasants. Some areas had not regained

¹Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era. p.13

by 1500 the population which they had lost earlier, although the population of western and central Europe as a whole had increased from about 53,000,000 in 1300 to about 70,000,000 in 1500, of which about one-tenth lived in cities and towns.²

The Townsmen

The success of the townsmen in business did much to the spirit of commercial and religious life of the times. The townsmen as a rule supported the territorial rulers and replaced the clergy and nobles in numbers and influence in the administration of the royal institutions. They did not, however, share equally in this growth of wealth and influence but were subject to the same stratification as was evidenced in feudalism. The patricians were the top echelon, or capitalists who controlled the economic and political life of the community. Since they controlled commerce, production, and the finances of the community, they were able to establish themselves as the social power within the community.³ This power was apparent in their luxurious manner of living.

They lived in expensive mansions and palaces on an equal with the nobles. Many of these palaces had furniture made on newly invented lathes, expensive carpets from the

²Ibid.

³Preserved Smith, The Age of the Reformation. p.3

East, gold and silver services, the first sanitary facilities, and running water piped into the areas where they lived. The patricians often bought large estates and titles and provided themselves with all the luxuries of the nobles.

To display their wealth, the men usually wore large expensive hats, coats with fur collars, and ornate rings. The women wore dresses of expensive materials, elaborate hairdressings, and jewelry so intricate they became the source of much public ridicule by the preachers of the time. This ridicule, in the form of civil complaints, resulted in the passage of many civil laws limiting or prohibiting the display of such luxuries because the lower classes were trying to imitate the patricians.

The Craftsmen

By far the most numerous class of townsmen were the small urban proprietors, consisting largely of guild masters, journeymen, traders, and officials, who constituted approximately 90 per cent of the population.⁴ This group was as a rule a fairly prosperous, hardworking and stable element of the population. Often this group would revolt against the patricians, usually for political rather than economic reasons, and try to divest the patricians of their control over the town councils.

For the most part, the remainder of the population

⁴Ibid., p. 15

of the towns consisted of a small but increasing number of day laborers and servants. While the patricians lived in their large mansions, these laborers and servants were jammed into crowded, multi-storied structures which usually contained only the simplest necessities of life. The streets were usually very narrow and infrequently paved. There were plagues that took the lives of many people living in these crowded conditions, where improper sanitary facilities and filth served to aid in the rapid transmission of disease.

The Peasants

The peasants were the class that was despised by the other classes at this time. Frequently in the literature and writings of the time, the peasant was referred to as "the dumb peasant". This reflects that their toil and slowly improving social status still had not gained them any respect. Most of them still lived in small huts with thatched roofs of straw, wooden chimneys covered with clay, dirt floors and very meager furnishings inside. Often, cattle, poultry, and peasants occupied the same living quarters. Their clothing was simple, usually consisting of woolen undergarments and linen or woolen outergarments. The peasants were often isolated from the outside world and their life was a dreary one, consisting of work, church festivals, local market activities, and visiting entertainers. In many parts of Europe the peasants were determined to rise above their

social stigma by learning to read and write, and taking active interest in reform movements.

Feudalism

By 1500, feudalism had to a large extent already lost its reason for existing, for the kings and princes, with their armies, supported the territorial taxation, and they could provide more efficient protection than could the feudal cavalry.

Changes in the economy had proven the feudal lord to be dispensable.⁵ Some forms of the manor type economy remained, yet the emergence of a money economy, the beginning of the liberation of the serfs, and new forms of agricultural production all tended to decrease the importance of the feudal lord.

Feudalism as a system of government was on the decline during this time and was giving way to national and territorial courts.

The more feudalism declined, the more persistently the nobles clung to their rights, privileges and social status. While many served in the armies as officers, others moved to royal and princely courts to gain favors and privileges, and still others joined bands of robber barons, plundering and stealing from villages and merchants along

⁵Will Durant, The Reformation. p. 109

the highways and rivers.⁶

Chivalry, the social code of the feudal warriors, did not decline with feudalism but rather reached its peak during this time. While the virtues of personal fidelity, bravery, courtesy to equals, and respect for women were rapidly deteriorating, they were extolled with great magnitude. Determined to perpetuate their social status, the nobles worked out elaborate codes of bearing arms and formed aristocratic orders of knighthood, such as the English Knights of the Garter, the French Knights of the Star, and the Burgundian Knights of the Golden Fleece.⁷

Living in castles with intricate systems of defense, many feudal lords managed to live much more comfortably than had their ancestors, and more comfortably than all except the nobility, patricians, and some townspeople.

The Church in England

In England what we call the Reformation was in its beginning a political rather than religious movement; it had to do rather with the government of the church than with its theology. Actually, in its first phase the English quarrel with the Roman Catholic Church was not that it was Catholic, but that it was Roman.

Luther believed Christ was the head of the church

⁶Ibid., p. 16

⁷Ibid., p. 17

and men should not be compelled to answer to an earthly ruler regarding their spiritual matters.

The church was not merely a place where its people went on Sundays and holy days; it was intimately involved not only in the operations of the government but also in the details of every-day life. At the top echelon of the church the ecclesiastics were the advisers of kings and formed the majority of the House of Lords. At the lower echelon the parish was the unit of administrative as well as of religious and social life.

The church touched the average Englishman in all the important crises of his career, at birth through baptism, at adolescence through confirmation, at adulthood through marriage, and at death through extreme unction.⁸ All their lives, through the confessional and through the pulpit, it directed and guided the daily life of the average citizen.

Through the courts it maintained jurisdiction over all clergy, or anyone who could claim benefit of clergy.⁹ It exercised jurisdiction over all the contracts made under oath, over all property bequeathed by will, over all questions of inheritance where the legitimacy of the offspring was involved. Through ecclesiastical censure one might be cut off from any consolation religion offered. In cases of

⁸Conyers Read, Social and Political Forces in the English Reformation, p. 14

⁹Ibid., p. 18

severe encroachment of church rules and regulations, imprisonment was permissible until such time as the church was appeased. Luther experienced this type of censure before he went into exile at Wartburg Castle.

The law which was administered by the church courts was not the common law of the land but the canon law, stair-stepped to a Supreme Court in Rome not in England. The Roman church was a state within a state, and the clergy, which included almost all educated men in England, had divided allegiance.

To appreciate truly the English Reformation, one must understand the two most significant attitudes that prevailed within England at this time toward the authority, allegiance, and obedience shown the pope. One attitude especially prominent during the early part of the Reformation was the "infallibility of the pope". Persons professing this belief accepted the pope as the ultimate authority in all religious matters, and the usurping of powers to control non-religious bodies was considered to be within the judicial rights and duties of the head of the church.¹⁰ Those professing this belief were willing to reduce all governmental and temporal bodies to papal servitude. Erasmus approved of this form of control as he did not want to jeopardize his position as a scholar, or minimize his social prestige.

¹⁰Samuel M. Jackson, "Erasmus", The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. IV 1952 p. 165

Large numbers of politically powerful people attained their positions by professing this belief, some only when they stood to gain economically or politically, and for others this reflected their true and honest belief. Graft and corruption could flourish under this system because anyone questioning the authority, or a decision of the pope, was subject to excommunication from the church and denied all the rights and privileges thereof. Few people were willing at first to pay such a severe penalty for voicing their beliefs.

The second attitude prevalent during this time was the acceptance of the pope as the earthly head of the church, the ultimate authority in matters pertaining thereto but having no jurisdiction over governmental and temporal matters.¹¹ Martin Luther was one of the most vociferous advocates of the latter belief. This view constituted the major portion of his early disagreement with the hierarchy of the Catholic church. He was one of the earliest advocates of the separation of church and state.

Luther believed in religious freedom and the right to express it. Erasmus was more conservative and believed the right was inherent so long as it did not conflict with established doctrine.

Strict adherence to papal regulations was just one

¹¹Ibid., p. 70

of the many burdens that became too much to endure. The rights of individuals were directly proportional to the amount of money one had to bribe officials, or to political freedom one enjoyed within any specific territory.¹² The laws were unjust and unequally executed.

English Law

In England capital crimes constituted the following: murder, arson, escape from prison, hunting at night with painted faces, embezzling, carrying horses into Scotland, practicing witchcraft, deserting from the army, picking pockets, and counterfeiting. All of these were punishable by hanging, but crimes considered to be particularly terrible such as poisoning, the punishment was boiling in oil or burning to death. Treason and heresy were punishable by any of the above methods, determined by the tribunal or monarch trying the case. Lesser punishments consisted of flogging, branding, the stocks, clipping ears, piercing tongues and imprisonment in dungeons made as horrible as possible, often too small to stand upright or lie at full length.

The "Blue Laws" which were prevalent in Europe at this time were so paternalistic that they sought to regulate the private lives of the citizen, of his clothes, the number of courses of his meals, how many guests he could invite to

¹²Cardinal Gasquet, The Eve of the Reformation, pp. 72-75

a wedding dinner or dance, how long he could visit the tavern and how he could spend Sunday. One reason for these laws was to differentiate the social classes in an era that was extremely class-conscious. The blue laws were enacted by the nobility who were constantly striving to make the lower classes know their position and dress and act accordingly. Their belief was that by regulating all of the above according to importance they placed upon them, they could control the upper strata of the social class. Enforcement of these laws was attempted but extremely difficult to maintain, especially pertaining to such things as the number of courses per meal. Inadequate means of surveillance aided in the ultimate defeat of these laws.

When a person was found guilty of violation of one of these or any other laws, the only refuge of the criminal was the greed of his judges. There became established prices for crimes committed; bribery was more or less prevalent. Violations of the law became more frequent during this time, especially by persons who could afford the amount of the bribe, or those who might profit monetarily by the violation.

The methods of trying criminals were as cruel as their punishments. The rack, or piling of stones upon their chests and other instruments of pain were often used to obtain a confession.¹³ Although English law in spirit was against

¹³Smith, op. cit., p. 663

torture, the practice was used extensively throughout the country.

Education

Education during the Reformation varied from country to country. Holland, the native land of Erasmus, had great institutions like Deventer, and England could boast of Eton and Winchester as two of her great schools. Only the most fortunate students were allowed to enroll in these schools because the number seeking admission exceeded the number that could be educated there. In order to obtain an education, some students were required to serve apprenticeships, or work in order to obtain meager funds to pay a tutor, or to purchase worn Latin readers.

Many tutors used filthy and abusive language, flogged the boys excessively and drank heavily in their presence. Erasmus mentions this repeatedly in his works and testifies he was subject to some harsh treatment and abuse in his early schooling.

The profession of teaching was despised by many as a menial one and very little monetary reward was in store for the pedagogue.

Many men spent more time in selecting the groomsmen and gamekeeper for his animals than he did in the selection of a teacher for his children.¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid.

After learning the mastery of reading and writing of their native tongue, the students turned principally to the study of Latin. The materials used were generally old and worn and only through repetition and imitation did the students obtain a thorough knowledge of the subject. For many years the grammar and rhetoric of Latin was practically all that was studied and by this means most students became fluent in its usage.

Erasmus and Luther shared the belief that too many people constituting the masses in England and throughout most of Europe were in need of education. However, Erasmus centered his educational desires on the nobility and upper classes predominantly. He did not share Luther's enthusiasm for educating the lower classes.

The masses were primarily illiterate and without formal instruction or education. Luther suggested that "civil authorities ought to compel people to send their children to school. If the government can compel men to bear spear and arquebus, to man ramparts and perform other martial duties, how much more it is the right to compel them to send their children to school".¹⁵

In a "Letter to the Alderman and Cities of Germany on the Erection and Maintenance of Christian Schools" he urged strongly the advantages of learning. "Good schools are

¹⁵Ibid., p.665

the tree from which grow all good conduct in life, and if they decay great blindness must follow in religion and all useful arts...Therefore all wise rulers have thought schools a great light in civil life".¹⁶

Erasmus wrote much pertaining to education and was concerned greatly that the humanities be taught humanely. He also believed one should begin with Cato and proceed all the way through the best known authors of Greece and Rome. Erasmus wrote his Colloquies, considered by many as the best Latin of the century, so that instruction would be more pleasant and easier for the student to comprehend.¹⁷ Throughout the work is small amounts of liberal religion and moral instruction. Luther, although he later came to disagree with the author, suggested the use of the Colloquies in Protestant schools.

Luther's views concerning society were for the most part conservative. The social and economic implications of his The Freedom of the Christian Man, his doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, and glorification of labor were felt in ways not anticipated by the author. He advocated systematic and efficient state care for the poor and that the general welfare of citizens be provided for

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 667

when necessary. Erasmus was content to leave the care of the poor to Luther and others and preferred not to be a "defender of the rights". Luther was not a promoter of rugged individualism despite the fact his environment had been predominately agricultural. He did have a good conception of how greedy and covetous businessmen could suppress the desires of farmers and the working class to produce more goods.

The Peasants' Revolt

The practice of oppressive demands without corresponding remuneration was partly responsible for the Peasants' Revolt that occurred in Germany during the Reformation. The religious revolts of the Reformation seemed to offer the workers in the fields a reason to demand a larger share of the prosperity Germany was enjoying at this time.¹⁸ Germany had experienced several periods of rural outbreaks and unrest. The spiritual unrest had tended to contribute to social unrest with the result that open rebellion occurred. In 1521 a pamphlet circulated in Germany entitled "Karsthans" or "Pitchfork John" pledged peasant support and protection to Luther; and a continuation later in the year advocated a rural insurrection against the Catholic church. Luther had become the idol and envisioned emancipator of the "man in

¹⁸Durant, op. cit., p. 382

the field", but he was not to remain their idol throughout the Peasants' Revolt.

Johannes Eberlin wrote a pamphlet in 1521 advocating universal male suffrage, the subordination of every ruler and official to popularly elected councils, the abolition of all capitalist organizations, the return to medieval price-fixing for bread and wine, and the education of all children in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, astronomy and medicine. In 1522 a pamphlet entitled "The Needs of the German Nation" which was falsely attributed to Emperor Frederick III, deceased, called for the abolition of Roman and canon law, limitations on business organizations, the removal of all tolls, duties, passports, and fines, the exclusion of the clergy from civil government, and the confiscation of all monastic wealth and its distribution to the poor.¹⁹ These works reflect part of the unrest that seethed within the workers in Germany at this time.

The Peasants' Revolt was not completely unexpected. One Catholic humanist, Johannes Cochlaes, warned Luther that the people in the towns and the peasants in the provinces would inevitably arise in rebellion because of the vast amount of abusive pamphlets, books, and other literature that had been distributed. Neither Luther nor the preachers and publishers of the material were willing to accept any

¹⁹Ibid., p. 383

blame for the uprising, and initially led the peasants to think their grievances were justified. Luther and his followers did encourage the rebellion by their continued writings calling for a better life and better social conditions for the oppressed. Luther was not fully aware of the impact his writing was having on various men.

Thomas Munzer had been appointed preacher at Allstedt and promptly demanded the extermination of the "godless" because they were not supposed to have the right to live except when permitted to do so by the elected. His proposal was that the princes lead the people in a revolt against the clergy and the capitalists. When the princes did not respond to his proposal, he called upon the people to overthrow the princes too, and establish a refined society as Plato had envisioned. He considered all goods to be common goods and should be distributed according to the necessities of the people. Munzer also advocated the hanging or beheading of any prince, count, baron, or other government official who failed to accept and put into practice his theory.²⁰ He was expelled from his pastorate with the help of Luther and wandered from town to town until he reached the textile town of Muhlhausen, where the political and social atmosphere was ripe for his trend of thinking.

In Muhlhausen there was a ex-monk, Heinrich Pfeiffer,

²⁰Franklin H. Littell (ed.), Reformation Studies. pp. 239-250

who had gained considerable political and social influence with the lower middle class. Pfeiffer and Munzer immediately aligned their philosophies; and when Munzer preached his radical views to the textile workers, the ensuing revolt gained complete control of the government of the city. These people confiscated all the property of the church, drove out the monks, and began to prepare for an invasion by government troops. They organized the peasants into an army and had artillery cast for it in the monastery.

During this time revolt broke out in southern Germany after a hail storm had destroyed almost all the crops the peasants needed to live on and to pay their feudal dues and church tithes. At this time Hans Muller and Munzer banded together with a pledge to emancipate all the oppressed farmers in Germany. There were approximately 30,000 armed peasants in South Germany at this time, refusing to pay state taxes, church tithes, or feudal dues, and sworn to emancipation or death.

During this time the Twelve Articles were printed and distributed quickly throughout much of Germany. The exact author is not known, but some historians believe the Articles were the composite work of several writers of the time. Preserved Smith said:

The material in them is drawn from a whole people. Far more than in other popular writings one feels that they are the genuine expression of the public opinion of a great class. ²¹

²¹Smith, op. cit., p. 92

The demands of the peasants are not excessive as they plead most of all for justice and relief from oppressive taxation.

The Articles were as follows:

To the Christian reader peace, and the grace of God through Christ.

There are many anti-Christians who have lately taken occasion of the assembly of the peasants to cast scorn upon the Gospel, saying, Is this the fruit of the new evangel? Is no one to be obedient, but all are to rebel... to overthrow, or perhaps to slay, the spiritual and temporal lords? To all these godless and wicked critics the following articles make answer, in order, first, to remove this reproach from the Word of God, and second, to justify in a Christian way the disobedience, nay the rebellion of the peasants.

First, It is our humble petition and request, as also the will and intention of all of us, that in the future we should have authority and power so that a whole community should choose and appoint a pastor, and also have the right to depose him...

Second, Since the tithe is appointed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, we will...pay the just tithe of grain, but in a proper way...We will that for the future this be gathered and received by our church provost, whom the community appoints; that out of it there shall be given the pastor... a modest, sufficient maintenance for him and his...that the remainder shall be distributed to the poor and needy who are in the same village....The small tithe we will not give at all, for God created cattle for the free use of men...

Third, It has been the custom hitherto for men to hold us as their own property, and this is pitiable, seeing that Christ has redeemed and bought us all with the precious shedding of His blood, the lowly as well as the great....Therefore it agrees with Scripture that we be free, and will be so...To our chosen and appointed rulers (appointed for us by God) we are willing obedient in all proper and Christian matters, and have no

doubt that, as true and real Christians, they will gladly release us from serfdom, or show us in the Gospel that we are serfs...

Sixth, We have a heavy grievance because of the services which are increased from day to day...

Eighth, We are greatly aggrieved, as many of us have holdings that will not support the rents we pay, and the peasants suffer loss and ruin. Let the lords have honorable men inspect said holdings, and fix fair rent... for every laborer is worthy of his hire....

Tenth, We are aggrieved because some have appropriated to themselves meadows out of the common fields, which once belonged to the community...

Eleventh, We would have the death dues entirely abolished. We will not suffer it, nor allow widows and orphans to be so shamefully robbed....

Twelfth, If one or more of the articles here set forth... can be shown to us by the Word of God to be improper, we will recede from it if this is explained to us with arguments from Scripture.²²

Luther was sent a copy of the Articles and asked for his support of the movement. He replied with a pamphlet "Admonition to Peace" in which he applauded the peasants' willingness to submit to correction by Scripture; but denied his speeches and writings had aided or abetted the revolutionaries. He chided the hierarchy with the following statement.

We have no one on earth to thank for this mischievous rebellion except you, princes and lords, and especially you blind bishops and mad priests and monks, whose hearts are hardened against the Holy Gospel, though you know that it is true and you cannot refute

²²Durant, op. cit. pp. 384-5

it. Besides, in your temporal government, you do nothing but flay and rob your subjects, in order that you may lead a life of splendor and pride, until the poor common people can bear it no longer....Well, then, since you are the cause of this wrath of God, it will undoubtedly come upon you, if you do not mend your ways in time....The peasants are mustering, and this must result in the ruin, destruction, and desolation of Germany by cruel murder and bloodshed, unless God shall be moved by our repentance to prevent it.²³

Although Luther denounced the hierarchy, he also failed to support the Peasants and their Articles of freedom. Conversely he supported only two of the articles, those being the right to select their pastor and the death duty.²⁴ He said the peasants and nobles should have submitted the whole issue to arbitration, knowing the illiterate peasants stood little chance to gain their requests by this means.

When war broke out, Luther was at first considered the champion of their cause, but he quickly established his position as clearly being against any rebellion or insurrection.

The Peasant leaders, however, felt it was now too late to retrace their steps as arbitrating or conceding their beliefs now would only bring punishment. They mourned Luther as a traitor and proceeded with plans for the revolt. The dreams of equality continued: the nobles were to dismantle their castles and live like peasants; they were not to ride

²³Durant, op. cit. p. 386

²⁴Read, op. cit. p. 73

on horseback because it raised them above their fellowmen. Pastors were to be servants of the congregation, not its master, and would be replaced if they did not adhere strictly to the Scriptures. The workmen also had demands. They denounced the monopoly of public offices by the rich, the embezzlement of public funds by corrupt officials, and constantly higher prices for goods while wages remained stable.

In the spring of 1525, the Peasants' Revolt flared openly in several different places. First attempts to repel the peasants were unsuccessful, and many clergymen were driven from their monestaries and municipal governments were overthrown and replaced by communal authorities.²⁵

Fearing that complete anarchy would result if the peasants won the war, Luther wrote a tract "Against the Thievish, Murderous Hordes of Peasants" wherein he attacked them with violent language. He urged the government to kill them without pity and to avoid a peasant as they would the devil. He encouraged soldiers to die "obedient to God's work in Romans 13, and in the service of love to free your neighbor from the bands of hell and the devil". Later he wrote: "It is better that all the peasants be killed than that the princes and magistrates perish because the rustics took the sword without divine authority". Luther succeeded

²⁵George L. Mosse, The Reformation. p. 26

in alienating the lower classes and many of them turned from Lutheranism to more radical sects, others accepted atheism, and still others returned to the Catholic church.²⁶

While Luther was being so vociferous in his attack upon the peasants, Erasmus refused to be drawn into the controversy, although he was living in Germany at the time. He did not want to align himself with the illiterate peasants who did not respect his intellect; nor did he want to alienate the nobility and church hierarchy who held him in high esteem. Erasmus was almost always reluctant to break with established tradition.

Erasmus did indicate he was nervous and concerned about the situation when he wrote to a friend that the revolt was like a hydra: when one head was cut off, nine sprang up in its place. He wrote to Polydore Vergil, September 5, 1525.

Here we have a cruel and bloody story; the peasants rush to their destruction. Daily there are fierce conflicts between nobles and rustics, so near that we can almost hear the noise of the artillery and the groans of the dying. You may guess how safe we are.²⁷

On September 24, 1525, Erasmus wrote to his friend Everard, president of the Supreme Court of Holland, that "much more than one hundred thousand peasants had been slain in Germany, that daily priests, the inciters to the rebellion

²⁶Mosse, Ibid., p. 91

²⁷Preserved Smith, Erasmus, p. 269

were captured, tortured, beheaded, hung and burned"...The remedy he added, though harsh, was necessary.²⁸

The Peasants' Revolt ended shortly after Erasmus' correspondence with Everard.

The untrained, illiterate rustics had been beaten and their leaders put to death, but not before 130,000 died in battle and 10,000 executions had taken place. The peasants roamed the highways or hid in the woods, as many of their homes were destroyed in the conflict. The rebels had in many instances burned the charters that recorded their feudal dues and new ones had to be drawn up, renewing the obligations.²⁹

Defeat at the hands of the oppressors did not prevent the peasants from desiring and seeking to improve their social conditions. They had lost the war, but the seeds of social unrest and dissatisfaction had been focused and conveyed to nearby countries where the Reformation was to ultimately aid in the improvement of these conditions.

²⁸Smith, op. cit., pp. 269-70

²⁹Durant, op. cit., pp. 392-3

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERES

The political and economic disorder of the Reformation was not of sufficient magnitude during the early years to warrant drastic changes in these areas. There were changes taking place, and disorder was present, but this should not be exaggerated. During the reign of King Henry VII, England was primarily feeling some of the results of the changing social, economic, and political structures that had been in operation for many years. There were pronounced changes in the economic structure of the country with the rise of the merchant classes, increased industry, increased trade and export and the increase in sheep raising.

When King Henry VIII ascended the throne he was forced to deal with some of the above changes that became more pronounced during his reign.

Absolute power of the monarch had not been established when King Henry VII was ruler and the Battle of the Roses between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians was causing political upheaval.¹ By the time Henry VIII became monarch, the only political uprising to occur resulted from a few citizens in the north of the country who were dissatisfied with their representation in parliament.

¹John Duncan Mackie, The Earlier Tudors. p. 71

England under King Henry VII was predominantly a country without severe financial problems. There was a shift from a rural agrarian society to a urban industrial and commercial society during this time. This change in the social and economic structure was partially responsible for the multitude of problems that became more pronounced during King Henry VIII's reign.

From the very onset of his ascendancy to the throne, Henry VIII's financial problems became apparent. Large amounts of money were being spent through the machinery of the legislature that had acted so frugally under the influence of King Henry VII. Some of the financial problems King Henry VIII encountered were of his own making. Whereas his father had spent many years of frugal spending, Henry VIII during his first years as monarch was supporting many types of sporting events and gaities of which there was almost an endless pageantry. Lord Mountjoy wrote to Erasmus in May of 1509

Oh, my Erasmus, if you could see how all the world here is rejoicing in the possession of so great a prince, how his life is all their desire, you could not contain your tears for joy. The heavens laugh, the earth exults, all things are full of milk, of honey and of nectar! Avarice is expelled the country. Liberality scatters wealth with bounteous hand. Our king does not desire gold or gems or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality. ...The other day he wished he was more learned. I said, that is not what we expect of your Grace, but that you will foster and encourage learned men. Yea, surely, said he, for indeed

without them we should scarcely exist at all.²

This eloquent description of King Henry VIII must have pleased Erasmus, as he had visited the royal palace in 1499 and had met the young prince at that time. Erasmus took advantage of his meeting with the future monarch and wrote a poem he dedicated to Henry.³ This was the beginning of a long and profitable friendship for Erasmus.

Absolute power of the monarch had not been firmly established during the reign of Henry VII, but the king was the head of the legislative body of the government, and therefore was responsible for the economic welfare of the country.⁴ The king did not make the laws as they were made by God, and the law of nature was merely an expression of the divine law. This was the belief of the majority of the people of England.

The body of law consisted of royal judges, the council, and the council of parliament. These groups, with the king, "declared" the laws of the land and supervised its enforcement. They were careful not to transgress the divine laws that had been so traditional in England.

When Henry VIII ascended the throne he immediately began to set his political machine in order. Only a small minority of the English people exercised any political power

²Ibid., p. 235

³Preserved Smith, Erasmus. p. 61

⁴Will Durant, The Reformation. pp. 108-09

at all. The power of this period was reflected as being between the king and the gentry. Henry VIII was not concerned with the divine laws as his father had been, but rather, he concerned himself with "packing" the parliament in order to dominate them and get legislation favorable to him passed. Henry VIII's real achievement was in his ability to draw the gentry into the operation of the government and impose upon them a share of the responsibility for his policies. This was to be reflected in his severance with the church of Rome, when at every step in the slow process he had the support of the English parliament.

Henry VII had possessed a desire to have England at the forefront as an economic power of the world, but the changes in the social and economic structures prevented him from achieving this desire during his lifetime. It was not until his son became ruler that the change from an agrarian society to an industrial and commercial society became pronounced enough to reflect in a monetary gain of any consequence.

In the economic sphere, Luther was as conservative in the same sense as the theological. In both he charged the church and state with innovation and demanded they return to the New Testament and to the early Middle Ages. Europe had been agrarian, and the church had bestowed the highest esteem on agriculture and the least on commerce. This too was Luther's scale of values. He believed that increased

trade only encouraged usury and the charging of interest, to which he was violently opposed.⁵ He said,

One gulden cannot produce another. The only way to make money is to work. Monastic idleness is a stench. If Adam had never fallen, he would still have worked at tilling and hunting. Begging should be abolished. Those who cannot protect themselves should be maintained by the community and the rest should work. There is but one exception. The aged with available funds may loan at interest not in excess of five per cent or less, depending on the success of the enterprise.⁶

The change in the monetary structure that was transforming much of Europe into capitalistic economies from agricultural economies was incomprehensible to Luther. Its obvious manifestations, high prices and growing disparity in wealth, were to him nothing more than the results of the greed and avarice of sinful men. This trend is consistent with his own personal indifference to money and wealth, other than as a means of subsistence and something to share with others.

This attitude was not the prevalent attitude during the reigns of Henry VII or Henry VIII, who had initially inaugurated the capitalistic trend in the English economy.

Henry VII had rearranged jurisdictional stratification in order to dispossess the sheriffs of some of their power. This power he conveyed to the justices of the peace who

⁵Walter I. Brandt (Ed.), Luther's Works. Vol. 45, pp. 234-5.

⁶Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand. p. 237

were charged with the responsibility of arresting criminals and seeing that the king's orders were obeyed. Local disorder had been a constant problem to previous kings and Henry invested within the powers of these justices of the peace ample authority to maintain law and order.⁷ This form of government was not without its detriments, cases of justices extorting large sums of money from offenders being common.

When Henry VIII enforced proclamations against enclosure, and sheep raising that limited the amount of land that could be enclosed, the number of acres that must be cultivated and the number of sheep that could be raised on the land; he encountered difficulties with these justices of the peace. Many of the justices whose responsibility it was to regulate and enforce the proclamation, were the enclosures.

During the reign of Henry VII there was evidence of the royal powers being transmitted all the way through the various governmental levels down to the subjects. He had a very good relationship with parliament, retaining it as a function of the royal council that acted as the grand jury of all England.

In the parliament-chamber sat only the lords spiritual and temporal. There were two archbishops, nineteen bishops and twenty-eight abbots, although the latter very

⁷Mackie, op. cit., pp. 194-5

seldom ever attended. The commoners were also admitted to the parliament at this time and had become an integral part of it. They were elected by the wealthy traders and craftsmen of their towns. They were represented in parliament by a speaker, but their influence increased tremendously as the economic factor in politics increased.⁸

Some of the commoners were later to become the wealthy traders and merchant class during the reign of Henry VIII. These people had migrated into the large cities from the farms and began to learn trades and skills other than farming. Some were so successful they were able to open small shops and started dealing in various trading commodities.

Legislation under Henry VII was predominantly aimed to establish good order and to control trade and industry. The former was to strengthen his control through the council and justices of the peace. The latter was to strengthen his controls over trade and industry, and to increase his income.⁹

Economic legislation favored the trader and merchant. Henry, a mercantilist, set the interest of the merchant above that of the individual trader, and he set the interest of the manufacturer above that of the consumer. He restrained trade unions from venturing outside their area of work,

⁸Preserved Smith, The Age of the Reformation, p. 517

⁹Mackie, op. cit., pp. 196-7

and he vehemently opposed alien imports that would take money out of England, without English exports to counter-balance the trade.

The compelling force of the government under King Henry VII and Henry VIII was money. They normally obtained revenues from lands; from customs; from parliamentary grants; from dues that came to them as head of the feudal system; from the farms of shires and towns; and from money they received from the church.¹⁰ In addition to these funds, Henry VIII had vast amounts of revenue coming in through commercial trade and industry.

Trade on a large scale required capital, and capital invested in trade returned a safe and profitable investment. Usury laws which hampered such investments were either evaded or ignored. The ethics of charging interest became of sufficient magnitude to attract the attention of many of the scholars of the time. Luther wrote The Long Sermon on Usury in 1520, an attack directed at certain common financial practices of the day, which he contended were usury, practices which the papal theologians were willing to justify and defend.

The first part of The Long Sermon on Usury reflected what Luther believed should be the Christian attitude toward temporal goods. These goods were to be necessities and excluded many forms of "extras". He believed it was

¹⁰ Charles H. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation. pp. 120-01

sinful, and covetous to desire too many worldly possessions. The second part of the works is devoted to a lengthy discussion and criticism of the practice of "Zinskauf". The Zins, which was considered a tax or interest acquired a new meaning to Luther and his followers.¹¹

The common practice of a tenant using an owner's land and paying a percentage of the yield of livestock or produce as a rental became a form of usury to Luther. As the practice increased and became diversified, and particularly as money became the chief and ultimately the most prevalent medium of exchange, the magnitude of its "sinfulness" became increasingly more important to Luther. In The Long Sermon on Usury, Luther has the following to say regarding usury and trade.

The holy gospel, now that it has come to light, rebukes and reveals all the "works of darkness" as St. Paul calls them in Romans 13 (:12). For it is a brilliant light, which illumines the whole world and teaches how evil are the works of the world, and shows the true works we ought to do for God and our neighbor. As a result even some of the merchants have been awakened and become aware that in their trading many a wicked trick and hurtful financial practice is in use. It is to be feared that the words of Ecclesiasticus apply here, namely, that merchants can hardly be without sin (Ecclus. 26:29). Indeed, I think St. Paul's saying in the last chapter of the first epistle to Timothy fits the case, "The love of money is the root of all evils" (I Tim. 6:10), and again, "Those who desire to be rich fall into the devil's snare and into many useless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and perdition" (I Tim. 6:9).

¹¹ Brandt, op. cit., pp. 235-8

I suppose that my writing will be quite in vain, because the mischief has gone so far and has completely gotten the upper hand in all lands; and because those who understand the gospel are probably able in such easy, external things to judge for themselves what is fair and what is not, on the basis of their own conscience. Nevertheless, I have been asked and urged to touch upon these financial evils and expose some of them so that, even though the majority may not wish to do right, at least some people--however few they are-- may be delivered from the gaping jaws of avarice. For it must be that among the merchants, as among other people, there are some who belong to Christ and would rather be poor with God than rich with the devil, as Psalm 37 (:16) says, "It is better for the righteous to have a little than to have the great possessions of the wicked".¹²

To Luther, any form of profit or interest constituted usury and therefore was sinful. He criticized the Catholic church for its possession of large portions of land in England and other countries in Europe. When the manorial system began to disintegrate and lost its simplicity and stability, money payments started taking the place of the "share" and freed some of the landowners of rights to the dependant. Owners tended to purchase new lands surrounding their holdings and many small owners were forced to sell their holdings because they could not acquire enough land to support the increasing size of the family, and the rising cost of necessities.

During the reign of Henry VII the shifting of the manorial system from cultivated lands to enclosed sheep

¹²Brandt, op. cit., pp. 245-6

ranches presented a problem that required parliamentary action during the reign of Henry VIII. Of the lands that were not converted to sheep ranches, the remainder was purchased by the large land owners who increased their holdings and denied the small land owners access to their property when passage over their land was necessary. The large land owner was primarily concerned with the profitability of the land, and not with the rights of others.¹³

The enclosures of manorial lands into sheep ranches provided England with large quantities of wool which became the principal commodity of the early trading companies. The abundance of fine wool greatly enhanced the growth of the merchant classes and the trade guilds. During the reign of Henry VIII the export of "cloth" rose from about 85,000 to 120,000 cloths. The annual figure was upwards of 98,000.¹⁴ This business initially constituted the shipment of plain cloth because most of the buyers of large quantities wanted to dye their own cloth. Later, large quantities of dyed cloth were exported to new ports throughout the world. From the simple beginning of the cloth industry grew varied related businesses. Throughout England sprang up many tailor shops, mercantile stores and commercial export companies. The cloth

¹³Karl Holl, The Cultural Significance of the Reformation. pp. 80-1

¹⁴Mackie, op. cit., p. 462

trade was one of the first to form a large guild that would shake itself clear of local restrictions and become a large business.

With wholesale production came the use of simple machinery such as shears for cutting, and engines for straining and stretching cloth, and water mills to furnish the power. These new innovations were partially responsible for the tremendous rise in commercial capitalism.

Henry VII had done much to increase the commerce of England by carefully considering the welfare of the English merchant in all political treaties with other countries. He also had legislation passed regulating the ownership of vessels; the nationality and number of sailors that could man all ships; and determined what commodities, and the amounts of these commodities that could be exported and imported.¹⁵

Henry VIII was equally as concerned for the welfare of the English guildsmen and passes legislation to assure their continued growth.

Upon the operations of "strangers" the government kept a vigilant eye, though less forbidding perhaps than the native merchants would have wished. An act of 1439 compelled aliens to live in the houses of recognized "hosts", and to sell their wares within eight months. The immediate

¹⁵Mackie, op. cit., pp. 220-28

effects of the Evil May Day riots of 1517 was to harden the heart of the government. Against aliens, however, who came not to trade but to work, action at last was taken; an act of 1523 which prohibited alien craftsmen from taking alien apprentices, limited the number of journeymen whom they might keep, placed them under the supervision of the native guilds and compelled them to put special marks upon their wares.¹⁶

Because the above act was not enforced rigidly and violations became numerous, a new act was embodied into the statutes in 1529. It specified that:

Aliens were now permitted to keep only two alien servants; those exercising handicrafts were to pay all charges that subjects had to pay, and were to assemble only in the halls of their several companies; all were to swear allegiance to the king; denizens alone were to set up shops, and all provisions of the statute of 1523 were confirmed and made perpetual.¹⁷

The rise of capitalism in England provided the small businessman and land owner with problems that were uncommon to them. The small land owner had been accustomed to producing adequate amounts of necessities for him and his dependents to live on. The items they did not raise they could barter with other farmers for.¹⁸ With the advent of the "money" economy, these small land owners were forced to seek additional means of making a living because their meager crops would

¹⁶Mackie, op. cit., p. 468

¹⁷Mackie, loc. cit.

¹⁸Sylvia L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London. pp. 47-8

no longer produce adequate food, nor could they trade with other small land owners who were also producing inadequate crops. These small farms were unable to raise enough crops to sell a portion for money; therefore, they could not hire helpers to harvest the crops because the trend was toward payment for services rendered with money. Thus the transition from a "share" economy to a "money" economy took place. The small merchant and tradesman was faced with much the same problems because he no longer could trade with a fellow shop owner or small manufacturer for goods needed, but instead was required to purchase with money the items needed to maintain his stocks and supplies.

Luther was as vehemently opposed to the trading companies as he was to all other forms of capitalism. Of them he said:

On the trading companies I ought to say a good deal, but the whole subject is such a bottomless pit of avarice and wrongdoing that there is nothing in it that can be discussed with a good conscience. Who is so stupid that he cannot see that the trading companies are nothing but pure monopolies? Even the temporal laws of the heathen forbid them as openly harmful to the whole world, to say nothing of divine right and Christian law. They control all commodities, deal in them as they please, and practice without concealment all the tricks that have been mentioned. They raise or lower prices at their pleasure. They oppress and ruin all the small businessmen, like the pike the little fish in the water, just as if they were lords over God's creatures and immune from all the laws of faith and love.¹⁹

¹⁹Brandt, op. cit., p. 270

The increased wealth of the trading companies, merchant classes and guilds was offset by the decline in wealth of the peasants, serfs and small land owners. All was not well with the English economy during the reign of Henry VIII.

Henry was a forceful administrator. He maintained too extravagant a court and large sums of money were spent foolishly, thus causing a deficit in the governmental funds. He had reorganized the army, equipped it with new weapons, and spent large sums on modes of transporting these armies. He built the first permanent royal navy, which had cleared the coasts and English Channel of pirates. But he taxed the people to the limit of tolerance, repeatedly reduced the value of the currency, confiscated private property on minor pretexts, demanded "contributions", renounced his debts, and had developed the English economy in the hope that it would yield him additional revenue.

Agriculture was in a depression. Serfdom was prevalent, but economically detrimental to the crown. Enclosures for sheep pasturage continued; and the new landlords had doubled or quadrupled the rents of their tenants on the ground of rising prices, and refused to renew expiring leases. Many dispossessed tenants made their way to the large cities in hopes of obtaining work. This problem became so acute that it was necessary for parliament to pass acts against vagabonds and beggars. Many of these people were able to find work later on the large farms that had been acquired by the

wealthy people. During the period of transition the small agrarian land owner was the one who suffered the most from the changes that took place in the English economy.

While the commercial and industrial economy of England was suffering from over-taxation and a transitional change from the "share" to money, the vast wealth of the Catholic church was increasing. This tremendous increase in the wealth of the Catholic church was primarily the results of the church's acquisition of large areas of land surrounding their monasteries and the enclosure of these lands to make large farms. With the church's exemption from taxation, they were able to compound their wealth, thus becoming the largest holder of acreage in the country.

There were many people in England who believed the church was acting too temporally in acquiring all this land, and the "holy fathers" were concerning themselves more with temporal than spiritual matters. This complaint was common throughout Europe and Luther and Erasmus both pleaded for a return to spiritual matters, and more concern for the welfare of the soul and less concern for the welfare of the body.

Luther had been advocating the complete separation of church and state through revolution. Erasmus in his Institutio Principis Christiani asserts the divine right of kings, and states that "there is no duty by the performance of which one can more secure the favor of God than by making

oneself a prince useful to the people".²⁰ He believed the ruler was good, not because he was a king by divine right, not because he had derived his authority from the church, but simply because he was to do his duty as a man in the position in life to which he had been called. Erasmus further believed that the ruler should be above the people and should remove himself from their opinions, as it was "low, common and unworthy of him to feel with the people".²¹ It was not his desire that the "people" be without the gospel, but rather that they be educated first in order that they might interpret the "true" meanings of the scriptures. Erasmus shared Plato's belief that the ruler or king should be the philosopher, the people his subjects. The ruler was to interpret the meaning of the scriptures and convey this meaning to the people. To Erasmus the "true way" was through philosophy, whereas, to Luther the "true way" was reform. To Erasmus there was no weapon that could equal persuasion; Luther refutes this with his weapon, revolution.

Neither Erasmus, nor Luther, were satisfied with the relationship between church and state, nor were they satisfied with the conditions that existed within the church per se.

Erasmus wrote The Praise of Folly, a satire on the follies and frauds of those who professed to serve the church.

²⁰Robert H. Murray, Erasmus and Luther. p. 16

²¹Ibid., p. 17

The author satirized follies of all kinds, the student for his sickly look, the grammarian for his self-satisfaction, the philosopher for his quibbling, the sportsman for his love of killing, the superstitious for his belief in the virtues of images and shrines, the sailor for his folly in praying to the Virgin Mary, and the sinner for his foolishness in believing in pardons and indulgences. Folly could laugh at those who calculated with mathematical precision the number of years, even months and hours that s soul must spend in purgatory. It laughs also at those who foolishly thought they could erase a whole life of sin with the purchase of an indulgence.

But what shall I say of those that flatter themselves with the pleasant delusion that they can grant pardons for sin, and who measure out the periods of purgatory, as it were, with time-pieces, meting out centuries, years, months, days, hours, as if by a mathematical table where there could be no possibility of error? Or of those who, trusting to certain little magic marks and prayers with some pious imposter invented either for amusement or with a view to gain, promise themselves wealth, honours, pleasures, abundance, unfailing health, and a green old age, and in the other world a seat next to Christ himself--which, by the way, they would not wish to reach for a long time yet; that is, not till the pleasures of this life, however much against their will and however closely they may have clung to them, shall nevertheless have flown--then they would wish those heavenly joys to follow. Here is a man--say a merchant, or a soldier, or a judge--who thinks that out of payment of a single coin out of his robberies, all the villainess of his life may once for all be swept away, and imagines that so many perjuries, lusts, fits of drunkenness, so many quarrels,

impostures, perfidies, acts of treachery, can be redeemed as by contract--aye, so redeemed that he may now return to a new round of crime.²²

Erasmus had called the attention of much of Europe to the fallacies of the Roman doctrine; however, he was careful to omit passages regarding the purpose of the sale of indulgences that had been authorized by pope Leo X. Erasmus was a friend of the pope and as always did not intend to criticize the pope or the doctrines of the church. He believed the practices of the clergy in allowing such things to occur was too lax and not in keeping with the scriptures. Erasmus desired an awakening of the clergy through the literature he and others wrote, in order that the sacredness of the Gospel might be preserved rather than destroyed.

The ills of the day--in Church and State--his diagnosis reduced to one cause, and that was ignorance, ignorance of what Christ taught, ignorance of what the Bible meant, ignorance of what great contributions the Greek and Latin had made to the education of the human race. These evils could all be cured by knowledge, and it was his duty to supply it.²³

Luther was not so gentle in his opposition to the sale of indulgences. In Wittenberg Luther saw first-hand the naivete of the people as they purchased religious relics purported to remove all their past and future sins. The

²² Ibid., p. 14

²³ Ibid., p. 25

pope had pronounced All Saints day as the day for the sale of these relics.

The collection consisted of a thorn supposedly from the crown of Christ, certified to have pierced the Savior's brow. The purchase of this indulgence was calculated to reduce purgatory by 1,443 years. The collection also included: one tooth of St. Jerome, of St. Chrysostom four pieces, of St. Bernard six, and of St. Augustine four; of Our Lady four hairs, three pieces of her cloak, four from her girdle, and seven from the veil sprinkled with the blood of Christ. The relics of Christ included one piece from his swaddling clothes, thirteen from his crib, one wisp of straw, one piece of gold brought by the Wise Men and three pieces of myrrh, one strand of Jesus's beard, one of the nails driven into his hands, one piece of bread eaten at the Last Supper, one piece of the stone on which Jesus stood to ascend into heaven, and one twig of Moses' burning bush.²⁴

The sale of indulgences had begun during the crusades. They were conferred upon those who risked or sacrificed their lives fighting against the infidel, and had been extended to include those who had not been able to go to the Holy Land had made contributions. The device proved so profitable it was extended to finance the construction of churches, monasteries and hospitals.

²⁴Bainton, op. cit., p. 71

Pope Leo X authorized the sale of indulgences during the Reformation to obtain funds to build a cathedral in which to house the bones of St. Peter. To this Luther Said:

The revenues of all Christendom are being sucked into this insatiable basilica. The Germans laugh at calling this the common treasure of Christendom. Before long all the churches, palaces, walls, and bridges of Rome will be built out of our money. First of all we should rear living temples, next local churches, and only last of all St. Peter's, which is not necessary for us. We Germans cannot attend St. Peter's. Better that it should never be built than that our parochial churches should be despoiled. The pope would do better to appoint one good pastor to a church than to confer indulgences upon them all. Why doesn't the pope build the basilica of St. Peter out of his own money? He is richer than Croesus. He would do better to sell St. Peter's and give the money to the poor folk who are being fleeced by the hawkers of indulgences. If the pope knew the exactions of these vendors, he would rather that St. Peter's should lie in ashes than that it should be built out of the blood and hide of his sheep.²⁵

Luther continued to deny the divine rights of the pope; his jurisdiction over purgatory; his authority to remit sins; and his power to glean the poor in order to increase the wealth of the church. He believed "indulgences were harmful to the owner because they impeded salvation by diverting charity and inducing a false sense of security. Christians were to be taught that it was better to give to the poor than to receive a pardon. Those who preferred to purchase pardon's did not receive the indulgence of the

²⁵Ibid., p. 80

pope but the indignation of God. Indulgences are most pernicious because they induce complacency and thereby imperil salvation. Those persons are damned who think that letters of indulgence make them certain of salvation."²⁶

Luther preached against the sale of indulgences on many occasions. He did not specifically attempt to educate the ignorant people who were purchasing the indulgences, but he rather chose to denounce the pope and other clergy for their sale. Luther attacked the spirituality of the pope, accusing him of "stealing" from the poor people of Germany and the rest of Europe, in order to satisfy his own covetous desires. He became more pronounced in his attacks on the papal authority until he could contain himself no longer and he attacked the doctrine of the church in his Ninety-Five Theses which was nailed on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. This attack was not intended for publication or to be circulated, but it quickly spread throughout Europe. The atmosphere was right in England, Germany, Switzerland, and France for acceptance of the Ninety-Five Theses.

Revolution was everywhere. Social, economic and political codes of long standing were disappearing, and in their places were radical new theories and facts that were proving in many cases to be good for the countries, and good for the people.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., p. 82

²⁷ John W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century. pp. 135-38

The church no longer appeared to be a divinely appointed institution. It seemed rather to be a human institution whose members did not practice the divine righteousness they preached. The spiritual security sought by those who adhered strictly to the doctrine of the church was not present.

The church was not in any moral position to condemn the laymen because its standards of morality was not sufficiently above reproach. In too many cases the clergy had violated its sacred laws before the public.²⁸

The relations between the pope and the heads of government had come to be more and more secular, and most of their correspondence was related to pensions, revenues, and matters of monetary interest. In many cases special allowances were made as "favors" to the heads of state, that was contrary to the spiritual laws of the church.

In Rome there had developed a regular ecclesiastical machine whereby a cardinal attended to the necessary business of a nation, and from Rome there was a stream of papal officials and collectors, some of whom obtained high positions in the governments. The rulers were able to secure advancement for their nominees who likewise would bestow upon them a favor in return. Graft and corruption in high offices of the church had come to be almost synonymous in

²⁸George L. Mosse, The Reformation. p. 65

the prevailing attitude of the majority of the people of Europe, during this time of the Reformation.

There were other factors of importance in the shaping of attitudes toward the Roman church. There were, for example, the so-called mortuary fees. These fees were dues for burial in the consecrated graveyards, which also included the burial gowns. These fees were not extremely high but the manner in which they were collected was offensive to many. These fees were demanded at the wrong time, sometimes at the very grave of the deceased. They came at the wrong time, when one Richard Hunne, a prosperous London merchant, stood by and watched a thieving priest snatch the winding sheet from the body of his dead baby. Hunne, enraged, brought suit to recover. He lost his suit, carried the matter further, and was charged with heresy and imprisoned. He was ultimately found hanged in his cell. The church said he committed suicide, but a London coroner's jury said it was murder.²⁹

While spiritual and temporal conditions of the Catholic church worsened throughout Europe, Erasmus and Luther continued their sporadic war of words. This verbal battle began as a conflict between the religious dogma of Luther, and the spiritual scholasticism of Erasmus. Although it never completely divorced itself of these factors, their

²⁹Conyers Read, Social and Political Forces in the English Reformation. pp. 24-5

literary criticism of each other encompassed almost every important issue of the Reformation.

On several occasions, Luther and Erasmus were near agreement on an issue only to be separated by the proper approach to a solution. For the dogmatic, forceful Luther revolt and reform were his favorite means of achieving his desired goal. For Erasmus, the quiet scholar, the intellectual approach best served his purpose.

When Erasmus wrote his Diatribes on the Free Will answering Luther's charges that he be denied rights to the "promised land", he sent copies of the manuscript to pope Leo X and King Henry VIII, both enemies of Luther's.³⁰ Upon publication of the book, Erasmus then sent copies to the Duke of Saxony with a note stating he had not written against Luther before, because he had considered him "a necessary evil" and "a drastic antidote to the corruption of the time". The Duke replied, praising Erasmus' work and sent a copy of Luther's Monastic Vows with a request that Erasmus write a reply. Erasmus never replied to this piece of Luther's writing.³¹

When asked his opinion of the Diatribes on the Free Will, Luther replied that he "could hardly get beyond the first thirty pages, and that he was ashamed to answer so

³⁰Preserved Smith, Erasmus. p. 343

³¹Ibid., pp. 348-9.

unlearned a book of so learned a man".³² Erasmus wrote his Hyperaspistes as a defense of the Diatribes on the Free Will and as a means to re-express his disbelief in the Reformation. He blamed Luther for having caused the peasant's revolt. In the second half of the Hyperaspistes, Erasmus breaks completely with the Reformation movement and takes King Henry VIII's side in his feud with Luther that had erupted again.

Although Erasmus had plainly stated his position of opposing the Reformation, some moderates on both sides sought his judgement as an arbitrator. He was present at the great Diet of Augsburg when the two forces of the Reformation were attempting a reconciliation that was never to take place. The reformers refused to renounce their doctrines, and the church yielded little in its demands; therefore no progress was made toward a reconciliation.³³

Luther believed he had saved himself from excommunication from the church by his Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses and a very courteous letter he had sent accompanying the book to the pope. However, Leo X had made his decision months before he received Luther's letter and book, and had dispatched Sylvester Prierias, a theologian, to begin proceedings against Luther. Prierias's report, which he titled the Dialogue, found Luther guilty of heresy, and cited him to appear before

³²Ibid., p. 350

³³Walter G. Tillmanns, The World and Men Around Luther. p. 111

the pope. The Dialogue was forwarded to Cardinal Cajetan, the papal legate who was attending the Diet of Augsburg. Luther's reply to Prierias stated that only a general church council could represent the entire Christian church and that only Scripture was an infallible authority, and he asked why it was considered heretical to debate theological questions which had not yet been made official dogmas.

Meanwhile some of Luther's enemies forged a set of theses on the papal ban which were published under Luther's name, and added a bitter attack at the pope. As soon as Luther learned of this, he published his Sermon on the Ban which reflected his true views. The damage had already been done and Emperor Maximilian, who had seen a copy of the forgery, wrote a letter to pope Leo X urging that action be taken immediately against Luther. The pope sent Cajetan an official order to arrest Luther, and to enforce the ban if necessary, in order to bring Luther and his supporters into line. Luther immediately appealed to Frederick the Wise, who proposed to Cajetan that Luther be tried before an impartial German court. Cajetan assured Frederick that Luther would be given a fair and "fatherly" hearing, to which Frederick agreed. Cajetan wrote the pope for instructions because of the political implications of the trial, and was instructed not to enter into a disputing argument with Luther. Meanwhile, Frederick had written the pope and acquired a letter of safe-conduct for Luther.

Luther arrived in Augsburg but refused to appear before Cajetan until he had received a copy of the letter of safe-conduct. Luther spoke respectfully to the cardinal, and the cardinal received him in a "fatherly" manner as he had promised King Frederick he would. The first day was spent with Cajetan trying to instruct Luther as to possible errors he had made. Luther refused to believe these accusations were true, and would not renounce his beliefs.

The second day, Luther appeared before Cajetan with his superious Staupitz, and four imperial counselors. Still convinced that his views were not heretical and that a public hearing would clarify all misunderstandings, Luther asked for such a hearing. Cajetan would not grant this hearing and requested that Luther not be so obstinate. Luther then insisted on preparing a statement in defense of Cajetan's objections to his writings, and having the statement circulated before the theologians at the major universities for their opinions.

The third day, Luther again appeared with two of Frederick the Wise's lawyers, and presented a written statement in which he again stated that the pope could and did make mistakes, that a general church council was superiour to the pope, that a sacrament without faith on the part of the recipient carried no grace, and that the doctrine of justification by faith was supported by the scriptures. The statement annoyed Cajetan so much he lost his temper

and told Luther to either renounce these beliefs or never appear before him again.

Luther apologized for speaking disrespectfully, but he refused to renounce his beliefs and left Augsburg without notifying Cardinal Cajetan.

Frederick learned that Luther was to be arrested and his letter of safe-keeping voided. He arranged for Luther to be kidnapped on his return from Augsburg and taken to Wartburg Castle for safekeeping. Luther remained at Wartburg in seclusion for ten months while the furor of his trial subsided.

Luther had succeeded in airing his views to all of Europe. The pace of the Reformation movement was quickening. Reformers in many of the European countries began to expound their views less freely, but with more determination.

The troubles of the Catholic church were mounting almost daily as the erroneous news that Luther had been assassinated spread from country to country.

In England, King Henry VIII was breaking with the Roman church. He had all payments of the English clergy to the papacy stopped. Parliament further legalized the break with Rome, by giving the king the power to confirm ecclesiastical appointments, forbid the payments of Peter's Pence to the pope, and by the Act of Supremacy made Henry "the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England,"

but only as a layman as he could not consecrate the clergy.³⁴ Thus the Reformation Parliament had greatly enhanced the power of the king and placed the church under the complete power of the state, rather than the pope.

The Act of Succession carried the stipulation that all subjects must take an oath to support it. Sir Thomas More refused to declare the oath and was sent to the Tower and subsequently executed.³⁵ A new Treason Act was passed that made it high treason to deny that the king was the supreme head of the church.

The Catholic church was monetarily affected by this breach when Parliament passed the first Act of Dissolution, which suppressed 376 monasteries and turned the property over to the king.³⁶ Later, another act dissolved the remaining monasteries and again turned the property over to the king.

Although the findings of corruption were exaggerated and were only a pretext to seizing the property, which comprized about one-tenth of the national wealth, it is true that many of the monasteries, especially the smaller ones had failed to adjust to the changing circumstances of the Reformation period. They no longer served as outstanding examples of piety, their educational methods were outdated,

³⁴Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era. p. 298

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 299

they had lost their leadership in agricultural and economic affairs, and they were unable to solve the problems of poverty which plagued England.³⁷

When all is said that can be said of the shortcomings of the English monastic establishments, the fact remains that they were systematically plundered not because of their shortcomings but because of their wealth. The annual rental value of the monastic lands was more than double the annual expense of the government at the end of Henry's reign.³⁸ The whole transaction undoubtedly solved the financial problems of England, and created new problems for the Catholic church.

When Henry VIII broke with Rome, he could not foresee the religious and economic consequences which were to follow. He wanted to keep the church as it was, only under his control; and he wanted to keep England as it was. But even he, powerful though he was, turned out to be the blind agent of forces which were much stronger than he.

At this time, Luther had departed Wartburg Castle and was so busy with the Reformation movement that when the breach came between England and Rome, he could only chide Henry VIII briefly and without making any noticable effect upon the break. Luther probably would have hailed this

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Read, op. cit., p. 26

severance as a great victory for the Reformation had he and King Henry not been enemies.

Erasmus and Henry VIII had been friends of long standing, and Erasmus had graciously accepted every bequest the king had bestowed upon him. By these bequests, Henry had assured himself of not being attacked or exposed to severe ridicule. Erasmus was careful to write sparingly regarding the English-Roman issue. As usual, Erasmus was not willing to sacrifice his social standing with the nobility nor his scholastic position with the church to take sides in the issue.

Luther, meanwhile, was persistent in his attacks against Erasmus and he lost many friends of the Reform movement because of this. Luther was annoyed because Erasmus would not lend his powerful influence to help the revolutionaries. He said of Erasmus:

Erasmus wishes to leave behind him the faith he dares not confess during his lifetime. Such men, who will not say what they think, are paltry fellows; they measure everything by their wisdom and think that if God existed he would make another and a better world.

All who pray, curse. Thus when I say, "Hallowed by thy name," I curse Erasmus and all who think contrary to the Word.

He arrogates to himself the divinity he would like to take from Christ, whom, in his Colloquies he compares to Priapus and whom he mocks in his Colloquies and especially in his detestable Miscellany.

He thinks the Christian religion either a comedy or a tragedy, and that the things described in the New Testament never happened, but were invented as an apologue.

Erasmus is worthy of great hatred. I warn you all to regard him as God's enemy. He inflames the baser passions of young boys and regards Christ as I regard the court fool.³⁹

The above passage reflects Luther's attitude toward Erasmus in particular, and all those opposed to the reform movement in general. He was inclined to believe all who did not actively participate in revolt were acting against the will of God, and therefore were on the side of the devil.

Luther was willing to accept any inconvenience necessary to promote the Reformation. Worldly possessions he did not desire, nor social standing nor political influence. He was only concerned that his "truth" be told, the inequities be corrected in the Catholic church, and the Divine Law of God be both the temporal and spiritual laws by which man lived.

Outside of the reformers, Luther was considered by many to be a boisterous, dogmatic, ignorant monk who had appointed himself the sole interpreter of the Scriptures for the purpose of making himself head of the church. The following ditty composed by a Cambridge student in commemoration of Henry VIII's attack upon Luther, reflects the attitude of many people during the Reformation period.

A poysonous Dragon
hath infected my region,
of whom yong serpents hath sprong,

³⁹Smith, op. cit., p. 367

his venemous inflations
 hath infectid many nations,
 and mock of my people hath stong.

What ys this Dragons name?
 Luther, full of shame!
 in Germany hys his Denne:
 there he swellyth, he blowyth
 he burnyth, he glowth
 agaynst all tru chrysten men.

O noble Henry
 thou prince of high progeny,
 make serch thorow thy realme!
 this scysmatik collection,
 subdew by correction;
 for, shame to the they Dreame.

Now rex, defensor fidei-
 This name have I geuyn the,
 a name of hygh report
 help, therefore and ayed my preachers
 of trew fayth the feruent teachers,
 agaynst this arrogant sort!⁴⁰

Thus, the prevailing attitudes of adoration and contempt were manifested toward Luther and Erasmus by the people during the Reformation period. Their attitudes coincided with their position toward reform generally.

The Reformation was primarily responsible for many changes in the economic and political conditions that existed. It was partially responsible for capitalism, the use of money as a medium of exchange, a continued decrease in feudalism, continued freeing of the serfs, the questioning of the authority of the pope, establishment of the supremacy of the king in England, ushering in of new industries and commerce and numerous other changes in the economic and

⁴⁰ Ronald H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. p. 198

political structure of Europe.

CHAPTER IV

THE CULTURAL SPHERES

Educational Alterations in England and Germany

During the early years of the Reformation the principal means of obtaining an education was through the monastic school. The growth of an urban society in the latter years brought a demand for a broader curriculum. This demand was met by the cathedral schools. A third, and fourth type, were the schools conducted by priests, and the guild schools. It was already a common practice for the merchant and craft guilds to support priests for all kinds of religious services which they performed. When teachers were sought for the children of these members, it was natural that the priests were obtained to instruct the children. As the urban society expanded and municipal governments became borough schools, mostly supported and controlled by the secular authorities. Instruction was still mainly carried on by members of the clergy, but there was an increase in lay teachers.

Almost all of the schools were directly or indirectly under the domination of ecclesiastical authorities who were committed to the theology of the church. As humanism became more widespread in Europe, there was discord in the educational systems. The humanists, such as Erasmus, wanted to revive liberal education as it had been developed by the Greeks. Hostile toward the traditional curriculum, the humanists

sometimes succeeded in introducing humanist subjects into the curriculum of existing schools. Establishment of new schools in which the ideas of humanistic education prevailed also took place. The course of study advocated by the humanists tended to stress literary letters, and held little appeal for the commoner.

The impact of the economic and political changes that were occurring during the Reformation was not completely favorable to the educational system. The economic prosperity brought about by increased trade and industry had resulted in a spirit of materialism. If the youth were not destined for a church-related occupation, they believed they were wasting their time in acquiring an education that had no relationship to the world of trade and industry. They preferred to learn a trade at an early age in order to be assured of a livelihood later in life.

The Reformation initially had a marked effect on the existing church-dominated schools. Luther and the other reformers had contended that the current doctrines and practices of the church were wrong and dangerous to salvation. Many parents were reluctant to send their children to these schools where these doctrines were taught. There were cases of princes, nobles and municipal authorities, motivated by greed or theological principles, confiscating the endowments of the schools.¹

¹R. Pascal, The Social Basis of the German Reformation.
p. 211

Luther, although a consistent advocate of "the right kind of education", attacked the existing schools in harsh terms. He referred to the monastic and cathedral schools as "devil's training centers" and their textbooks as "asses dung".² In 1520, when Luther wrote his Open Letter to the Christian Nobility, he went so far as to say that rather than send a boy to such a school he would prefer that he received no education at all.

Luther for the most part preferred to remain within the middle class of the social structure where he had been born. He was not an agent of the upper classes and would not be mercenary regarding educational matters. He rather believed that the educational causes he fought for, like all other causes, were divine ones, and that he was working for the spiritual and cultural welfare of humanity. He was intellectually in the middle classes, considered their values as absolute and worthy of his sacrifice and work to maintain them.

There was essentially a difference between Luther's outlook toward education and that of Erasmus and the other humanists. The "social position" of Erasmus and most of the other humanists was different from that of Luther. Erasmus was always attached in some manner to the ruling class, or nobility - his manner of support. He lived on ecclesiastical

²Walter I. Brandt, Luther's Works. p. 342

endowments and the bequeaths of his benefactors. Erasmus preferred to live in the large cities, always close to a major university or library. Luther, preferred to remain in the boroughs among the middle classes. Behind the basic philosophies on education there was certain social antagonism between Luther and Erasmus. Intellectually this antagonism was manifested by a controversy concerning the nature of man's reason. Erasmus, not intending to reform, could let his reason encompass all phases of the educational system, hoping that abuses or inequities would be corrected through enlightenment of those in authority, usually the clergy. Luther, on the other hand, advocated violent reform when abuses or inequities were found. He sought to establish a new authority when the old one ceased to function as he thought it should function.

When Luther advocated the spiritual priesthood of all believers, in his Open Letter to the Christian Nobility, some people thought it meant that no formal education was necessary as preparation for the priesthood. Others even thought that God would speak directly to the human heart, thus eliminating formal education as a necessity for understanding the written Word. Munzer, one of the leaders of the peasants' revolt, was opposed to learning of any kind, and declared it to be "sinful and devilish".

Schools declined where these ideas were accepted. In Wittenburg, the attendance at the university fell sharply

while Luther was exiled at Wartsburg. In Erfurt, Munzer was responsible for the enrolment in the university declining to less than fifty students.³ Many believed there was no reason to study Latin, Greek or Hebrew as it was not necessary because Luther believed in using the vernacular and had made a German translation of the New Testament.

Because those opposing education were citing Luther's work to support their beliefs, Luther felt compelled to express precisely his attitude regarding education. He wrote (c. 1524) To The Councilmen Of All Cities In Germany That They Establish And Maintain Christian Schools.⁴

Luther maintains that education is necessary for the spiritual and mental growth of both boys and girls. He states that children should be relieved from household duties for one hour a day in order to attend school. He states that it is the responsibility of the municipal government to establish not only schools, but libraries and stock them with "good Christian literature". He further states, languages are essential for the study of the Scriptures, the combining of history, literature, and the other liberal arts with a thorough Christian training would provide an adequate education.

In addition to the above cited work, Luther also

³Ibid., p. 343

⁴Ibid., p. 344

wrote, Sermon On Keeping Children In School, in which he elaborates on the necessities of children obtaining a good education if they are to be able to interpret the Scriptures and be of service to the church, state and society as a whole.

By insisting that the state, as well as the parents, had a sacred obligation to educate the children, Luther won the reputation of being one of the first advocates of compulsory education for everyone. He believed leadership in both spiritual and temporal matters should be the responsibility of the middle-class and common people, not the nobility.

Luther was particularly interested in history, which he believed revealed God's divine guidance to man that was not in the Bible. He also held Aesop's Fables in high esteem, advocating their use in public schools as a necessity. He made one translation of the Fables into German to be used in the elementary grades.

Under the influence of Luther, educated teachers were appointed and given a regular salary from established endowments. He believed the teacher should be academically free from church dogmas and economically free from all ecclesiastical and secular forces that would prevent him from teaching "the truth".⁵

⁵Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era. p. 227

During the Reformation period, Luther and his colleagues revised the curriculum and teaching practices of the University of Wittenburg and many other schools. They also were instrumental in the establishment of many new universities and "grammar" schools, especially during the latter period of the Reformation when the monasteries were confiscated and converted into educational institutions.⁶

Luther said "the monasteries and churches should have taken the responsibility upon themselves to educate the children, but they were too busy tending to temporal matters".

One of the basic differences in their philosophies of education is reflected in Luther's work to The Councilmen, and Erasmus's De Constructione. In Luther's work he states that it is the responsibility of the councilmen to provide an education for the children "because their parents are totally inadequate to do this".

There are various reasons why parents neglect this duty. In the first place, there are some who lack the goodness and decency to do it, even if they had the ability. Instead, like an ostrich they deal cruelly with their young.

In the second place, the great majority of parents unfortunately are wholly unfitted for this task. They do not know how children should be brought up and taught, for they themselves have learned nothing but how to care for their bellies. It takes extraordinary people to bring children up right and teach them well.

⁶Ibid.

In the third place, even if parents had the ability and desire to do it themselves, they have neither the time nor the opportunity for it, what with their other duties and the care of the household. Necessity compels us, therefore, to engage public school teachers for the children.⁷

While Luther was expounding on the inabilities of the parents to provide adequate education for their children, Erasmus was advocating parental guidance in educational matters. Erasmus believed that the earliest education must come from the mother.⁸ She was to incorporate liberal amounts of exercise and play into her program of education. She should begin by stressing the importance of a sound body, carefully instructing the child in physical hygiene. When they approached the age of five or six a tutor should be secured. This tutor was to possess a knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and be well versed in the interpretation of the classics. This requirement was virtually impossible for most tutors of the time, as well as for most families. Erasmus is writing primarily to the "elite" or nobility as these were the people to whom he was best acquainted. It would have been a financial impossibility for the average middle-class or commoner farmer to employ a tutor for their children. Only the nobility could afford such extravagances as private tutoring.

⁷Brandt, op. cit., pp. 354-5

⁸Preserved Smith, Erasmus. p. 306

Erasmus wrote Education of a Christian Prince to Prince Charles who was later to be Emperor Charles V. He reflects his agreement with Plato that the people should be governed, but admonishing him not to overtax the people, to repel all violence, abolish the monasteries, construct schools, and not to concentrate on wealth. In the above mentioned work Erasmus says:

You owe it to Providence that your realm has been acquired without injury to any; your wisdom will be best shown if you can keep it in peace and tranquillity.⁹

Again in his Institutio Principis Christiani, Erasmus stresses the importance of the prince "laying aside the notion that he is to rule and govern by violence".

There is a fundamental difference in the philosophies of Luther and Erasmus toward education. This stems from the difference in their cultural backgrounds. Luther's middle-class, agrarian oriented background motivates him to strive for equality for the lower classes in educational, economic, political and spiritual matters. To Luther, there was not enough "love of God, love of earth, love of fellow-man". Instead, there was too much heathenism, materialism, and replacing of Christian teaching with classical literature of Aristotle and other "workers of the devil".

Erasmus, on the other hand, reflects his non-agrarian, scholastic and monastic background by his desire for increased

⁹Will Durant, The Reformation. p. 287

classical literature, grammar, humanities, classical languages, and prestige for instructors. The latter is reflected in his reply to a German schoolmaster who had written him a letter of thanks for his translation of Latin grammar, also commenting on some of the difficulties of teaching.

I admit that your vocation is laborious, but I utterly deny that it is tragic or deplorable, as you call it. To be a schoolmaster is next to being a king. Do you count it a mean employment to imbue the minds of your fellow citizens in their earliest years with the best literature and with the love of Christ and to return them to their country honest and virtuous men? In the opinion of fools it is a humble task, but in fact it is the noblest of occupations. Even among the heathen it was always a noble thing to deserve well of the state, and no one serves it better than the moulder of raw boys.¹⁰

Erasmus directs much of his literature on education toward the actual mechanics and practices of teaching. He had a good deal of experience in teaching, though he never remained as a professor in any one place for an extended period of time. He preferred to lecture and tutor students privately. In the latter he had been very successful in developing students who were devoted to him, and who embraced his culture.

Not only was Erasmus a teacher, he was also considered as one of the foremost critical scholars of Latin and Greek. His theological works were used as "source" material in many of the universities.

¹⁰Smith, op. cit., p. 303

Erasmus was not inclined toward democracy, nor was he preoccupied with establishing "common schools" for the lower classes as Luther was. Erasmus seemed always to be striving for improvement of the leader, prince, or aristocrat. He advocated the tutorial system as being the most superior, and obtained a very comfortable living for himself through this means, for much of his life.

Erasmus instructed so that his students might be worthy leaders and teachers. Luther emphasized education, that the masses might release themselves of their miseries.

Erasmus was instrumental in the organization and revision of several universities and grammar schools. He prepared, suggested and approved the textbooks for the English grammar school. Erasmus and Dean Colet were primarily responsible for the revision of the curriculum and the establishment of classical literature at Paul's school. Erasmus also translated numerous works from Latin, Greek, and Hebrew into German and English for use in other English schools. In De Ratione Studii, Erasmus sets forth his philosophy of education. This work was later instrumental in the establishment of the fundamental philosophies of the English grammar school. In the teaching of grammar, Erasmus stressed rote drill, accompanied by systematic reading. He believed literature should be read first for its literary content, then, for moral content. The student was to study Terence, Virgil, Lucian and other classical

writers. As a companion to the above work, Erasmus wrote De Duplici Copia Verborum Ac Rerum Copia, usually referred to as the "Copia". The "Copia" and the De Ratione Studii were the "twin pillars" of the English system of grammar and rhetoric-logic.

For the Upper English Grammar School, Erasmus wrote Institutum Hominis Christiani. He also translated Aesop, Lucian, Terence, Valla's Elegantiae, and Gaza's Greek Grammar for use in both the upper and lower schools.

Erasmus was as concerned that certain writers be omitted as he was in stressing the important writers that were to be studied. He believed Martialis, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius and Cornelius Gallus should be omitted because they were "wicked and ungodly". He said, "from the reading of these and such-like filthy writers, is convenient that the youth abstain because their evil words corrupt the good manners of the youth".¹¹

During the latter part of the Reformation movement Luther was instrumental in the establishment of many German "grammar" schools.¹² These schools were intended to be public schools for all the citizens of the community. The community was to share equally in the endowment with which to pay the instructor. Many of these schools were founded in monasteries

¹¹T. W. Baldwin, William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke. Volume I Pp. 94-163

¹²Pascal, op. cit., p. 215

that had been confiscated. Articles were drawn up for the disposition of the confiscated property; each member having a part in the control of the school. Since all were to share in the responsibility of maintaining the school it was the responsibility of the town council to provide enough of the accumulated tax funds to pay the priests and teachers. From the very beginning the town councils were reluctant to release the funds, some fearing the release of funds might jeopardize their political position in the community. Luther tried in vain to get the town councils to release the funds but in most cases his efforts were futile. This was especially true in small, rural, agrarian communities where there had not been any tradition of learning and cultural improvements.

In the schools that were successfully established, the curriculum consisted of Latin, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Cicero, grammar and singing. Luther wrote the Instruction of Visitors, in which he minutely outlines in every detail the format to be followed in these schools.¹³ Some of the requirements were:

Only Latin shall be taught, not German or Greek or Hebrew, which burden the children too much. The school must first be divided into classes. In the first class shall be grouped the children who are learning to read. Children's text-books with the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and other such prayers shall be first used.

The next class is for the children who can

¹³Ibid., p. 216

read and who must learn grammar. In the afternoon the teacher shall expound to them some of the fables of Aesop; the Pedagogia of Mosellanus; and when these books are learnt, those Colloquia of Erasmus which are useful and decent; such lessons should be repeated on the following day.

The third class should be composed only of the most gifted pupils. They should read Vergil, then Ovid's Metamorphoses; at the same time Cicero; and they must learn the formal structure of sermons. They shall continue with grammar, and learn to compose Latin verses; they shall further study dialectic and rhetoric.¹⁴

Although Erasmus disagreed with Luther in the selection of some of the above curriculum; especially music which Erasmus disliked, they were in agreement on the necessity of educating girls. Luther was the earliest of the reformers to advocate education for girls, with Erasmus being well ahead of most of his contemporaries in this advocacy. Erasmus branded as an untruth, the popular opinion that literature was neither useful, nor did it allow women to live or behave in such a manner as to protect and defend their reputation and their innocence. In one of Erasmus's Colloquies he writes of a monk that had maintained the belief that education took away from women what little brains they had. His belief is later altered to conform to Erasmus's indicating that women could profit tremendously by school attendance and studying the classical writers.

This revolutionary thinking on the part of Erasmus

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 216-7

and Luther concerning the education of girls reflects the social changes that were taking place during the Reformation concerning all womanhood.

Marriage and the Family

The areas of marriage and family life experienced considerable change during the period of the Reformation. It had been a common practice for marriage contracts to be arranged for boys and girls when they were as young as three and four years of age. These contracts could be annulled later if not consummated, but too frequently they were enforced for reasons other than mutual love. The legal age for marriage was fourteen for boys, and twelve for girls. Sexual relations before marriage had been condoned, and "bundling" became prevalent.

Divorce, although still uncommon, was permissible for specified reasons. Luther and Erasmus both advocated bigamy rather than divorce on several occasions. The most notorious case being, Erasmus's suggestion to Henry VIII that Henry take another wife rather than divorce Catharine of Aragon. While Erasmus had suggested that bigamy might be Henry VIII's best alternative in light of the adverse publicity the crown was receiving, he accepted a gracious stipend from Catharine for writing The Institution of Christian Matrimony as she had requested. The book extols the virtues of a perpetual and legitimate union between men and

women.¹⁵ It also discusses the importance of parental selection of the mates, the bringing up of girls, the main points being to seclude them from worldliness. A large portion of the book is directed to the evils of divorce but conversely, Erasmus states there are sufficient reasons to justify rendering a marriage null and void. He is careful not to elaborate too freely regarding the sufficiency of divorce, and considers the value of a papal dispensation only briefly. Erasmus was not in complete accord with the church regulations that permitted the pope to grant special dispensations. As always, he was careful not to arouse the ire of the prelate by disputing the doctrines of the church.

Erasmus was sensitive to the charms of women and shared with Luther the belief that man should not be required to take vows of celibacy. He encouraged children to "marry as the oldsters wished, and trust to love to grow with association rather than wither with satiation".

Luther's primary disagreement with the Catholic church concerning marriage was his belief that it did not constitute one of the seven sacraments, as the church advocated. Luther defined a sacrament as being "an outward sign of an invisible grace instituted by Christ and exclusively Christian". He believed marriage, ordination, extreme unction, confirmation, and penance did not fit into this

¹⁵Smith, op. cit., p. 279

category, thus they were not sacraments. The only two rituals that could properly fit into Luther's definition were baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Marriage is not a sacrament, Luther said, because it was universally valid among the non-Christians as well as the Christians. It was instituted by God, approved by Christ, and should be blessed by the Church. This belief tended to loosen the "psychological strings" that helped the church maintain control over the lives of the laymen. The church had received large sums of money by granting dispensations to marry in cases involving intermarriage between families.

While in Wartburg, Luther had become gravely concerned about the conditions that existed in the reform movement. Violence had broken out within the movement and priests were being dragged from their churches and abused. Part of the disturbance resulted from stricter regulations and adherence to the marriage sacraments.

Luther had written A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage in which he had outlined the spiritual responsibilities in marriage. Later, he wrote, Babylonian Captivity of the Church, in which he declared some of his personal views regarding marriage.¹⁶ The latter work became a source of considerable controversy, thus, adding one more source of disharmony between Luther and the church.

¹⁶Brandt, op. cit., p. 14

Luther could contain himself no longer and wrote, Of Monastic Vows in 1521. In this work he declared the vows of celibacy were no longer binding, and encouraged the monks and nuns to leave the cloister.¹⁷ It is conjectured by many writers that the numerous cases of broken vows witnessed by Luther were partially responsible for this belief. After leaving Wartburg Luther wrote another pamphlet which is titled The Estate of Marriage. This work is sometimes confused with his first work on marriage because of the similarity of titles. In The Estate of Marriage, outlined in three parts, are Luther's views on marriage and his disgust with the Pope for his vacillating attitude pertaining to marriage. In the introduction Luther says "how I dread preaching on the estate of marriage. I am reluctant to do it because I am afraid if I once get really involved in the subject it will make a lot of work for me and for others. The shameful confusion wrought by the accursed papal law has occasioned so much distress, and the lax authority of both the spiritual and the temporal swords has given rise to so many dreadful abuses and false situations, that I would prefer to completely overlook the matter".¹⁸ In The Estate of Marriage Luther expresses himself in minute detail concerning the persons who could be divorced, and how to live a Christian and Godly life

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 17

in the estate of marriage. This is probably his most complete work concerning the institution of marriage.

Many of the priests, monks, and nuns upon reading Luther's Monastic Vows left their ecclesiastical duties and married. Luther himself married a former nun in 1524, thus consummating one of the ideals he had advocated for the clergy.¹⁹

There were during the latter years of the Reformation many pronounced breaks in the cultural mores. There was an increase in engagements by the espoused couples themselves rather than their parents, sexual promiscuity before marriage, divorce, bigamy, ecclesiastical marriages, the number of clergymen leaving the church to obtain other employment. Although there appears to be a decrease in cultural tradition at this time, there actually was more of a shifting of values with importance being places in other areas.

Both Catholicism and Protestantism had set up and strengthened two forces for cultural regeneration: the improvement of clerical conduct through marriage or continence, and the emphasis that the home was the final citadel of faith and decency.

¹⁹Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. pp. 64-5

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Reformation in its embryonic stages was predominantly a philosophical and theoretical manifestation of a powerful but small group of individuals. As the movement progressed from country to country, there was an increase in the number of individuals contributing to its expansion. However, without tertiary contact, the two most outstanding individuals exerting the most influence were Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus. The Reformation never ceased to magnify the philosophies and theories of Luther and Erasmus. These philosophies and theories were systematically projected into the major issues of the movement. The most prevalent manner of projecting these ideas was through the media of "social awareness". Almost every major issue of the Reformation was initially introduced through its religious implications and deduced to encompass the social inequities that existed and the amelioration desired.

As the Reformation progressed there was less social inertia exhibited on the part of the masses. There was homogeneity among both major factions of the movement.

There were two main groups prevalent throughout the entire Reformation period. These groups were essentially: those forming a social and religious nexus upon the Catholic church; those depending upon reform leaders for guidance.

These two groups were diametrically opposed to each other throughout the years of the Reformation. The former group reflected social and religious ossification, contending the conditions within the church specifically and society in general were not in need of institutional changes. The latter group contended that conditions within the church and society had disgressed to a point where the spiritual and temporal needs of the people were not being met.

Chronologically it is impossible to assert that Erasmus and Luther, in every instance, can be categorized within either of these groups. To do so, it would require the omission of Luther's stand during the Peasant's Revolt and the alteration of Erasmus's views on education.

However, with very few exceptions, Erasmus may be considered as being opposed to any fundamental changes within the doctrines of the church. Luther, on the other hand, was opposed to the church's doctrines and structuralization from the authority of the pope down through the duties of the monks and priests.

Erasmus cannot be categorized as belonging to the former group on many of the social issues of the time. He advocated the melioration of social conditions throughout Europe, although he was reluctant to enfringe upon the doctrines of the church.

Through the religious, economic, political, and social spheres, the church prior to the Reformation had been able to suppress mobility within these areas, thus forming

a dependence upon the church. During the Reformation mobility was initiated in these areas through social interaction.

Erasmus on the one hand and Luther on the other were the men who supplied the motive and the driving force in the bursting of the barriers. They were each in their own way the supporters of authority, yet they laid down principles which shook these institutions to their very foundations. They improved much better than they anticipated, primarily through their literature.

Erasmus was more tolerant of the inequities of the church than was Luther. He believed there should be new solutions and innovations to these inequities before any form of revolutions should take place. Luther on the other hand, could not offer any solution for many of the problems, but was willing to abolish the existing standards in favor of standards he desired to put into practice at a later date. Both men were acutely aware of a need for improvements in the church specifically, and society in general. Erasmus was more willing to strive for improvement through a sensible and rational approach.

The Lutheran approach to all problems was exemplified through his interpretation of the Scriptures. Luther constantly strove to improve every area of living through the charismatic approach.

It was Luther's compelling desire that all men

be emancipated from the yoke of the Roman Catholic Church. He had not intended to revolutionize the doctrines of the Catholic church, nor did he initially intend to establish another religious order. When the seeds of emancipation had been sowed, the resulting harvest was more than Luther or any of the other revolutionaries had anticipated.

Luther was much narrower in his views than Erasmus. Erasmus reflected more toleration and flexibility in his approach to solving the problems that arose during the Reformation. Luther, did not use the intellectual approach to these problems, as he was not opposed to using force when force was needed, nor, was he opposed to supplying the personal drive and motivation to accomplish his goals.

In the opinion of the author, Erasmus supplied much of the intellectual power necessary for Luther to put his ideals of reform into motion. Erasmus had the ability to understand the many sides of every issue; whereas Luther, being more dogmatic, considered only his own side of almost every issue.

In their own ways Erasmus and Luther both supplied special talents that provided dynamic results during the Reformation. Erasmus, though less inclined toward revolt or personal sacrifice, provided much of the adheviseness necessary to help build continuity of the society during this period. He was able through his writing to suggest many constructive improvements in the society.

Ironically the Reformation which produced Protestantism produced more visible reforms in the social and cultural spheres than in the religious sphere. Almost without exception, the few reforms that occurred within the Catholic church during the Reformation period were at a later date abolished. The Catholic church is today structurally and basically much the same as it was during the time of the Reformation. The changes that occurred within the social, cultural, economic and political spheres of the Reformation were far more pronounced and in many cases equally as lasting as the rise of Protestantism.

Conclusions

From the evidence presented in this study the following conclusions appear to be valid:

1. The social implications of the Reformation exceeded the religious implications.
2. Literature played a tremendous part in creating "social awareness" throughout Europe. Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus were two of the most prominent writers of the period.
3. Europe during the Reformation period was extremely class-conscious.
4. Martin Luther believed in religious freedom and the right to express it. He considered the moral aspects of every issue.
5. Luther denied the infallibility of the pope and denied his jurisdiction in governmental and temporal matters.
6. Erasmus was unwilling to jeopardize his position as a scholar, or minimize his social prestige by aligning himself with Luther and other

"revolutionaries".

7. Erasmus was a humanist and Luther was a humanitarian.
8. The Catholic Church was oppressive in its dealings with its members. The church used the sale of indulgences to raise large sums of money; paid for the most part by the poor who could not afford to purchase these indulgences.
9. The establishment of "the absolute power of the monarch" occurred during the Reformation period, under the reign of King Henry VIII.
10. Basic changes occurred in the economy of England during the Reformation. Capitalism replaced the agrarian society with the advent of commerce and industry. The change in the economy resulted in money becoming the medium of exchange instead of the "share".
11. Social, economic and political mores of long standing disappeared during the Reformation, being replaced by new theories and processes that, for the most-part, proved good for the countries.
12. New philosophies of education were introduced during the Reformation. Luther's philosophy was to educate so that the masses might be relieved of their oppressions. Erasmus's philosophy was to educate so that the students might be worthy leaders and teachers.
13. Erasmus and Luther were two of the first advocates of compulsory education. Luther believed the education of the children was the responsibility of the state. Erasmus believed the responsibility of education lay within the individual families; and the "tutor" system was the best way to educate children.
14. Erasmus was primarily responsible for the establishment of the fundamental philosophy of the English grammar school. Classical literature played an important role in the foundation of present-day English grammar school curricula.

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