

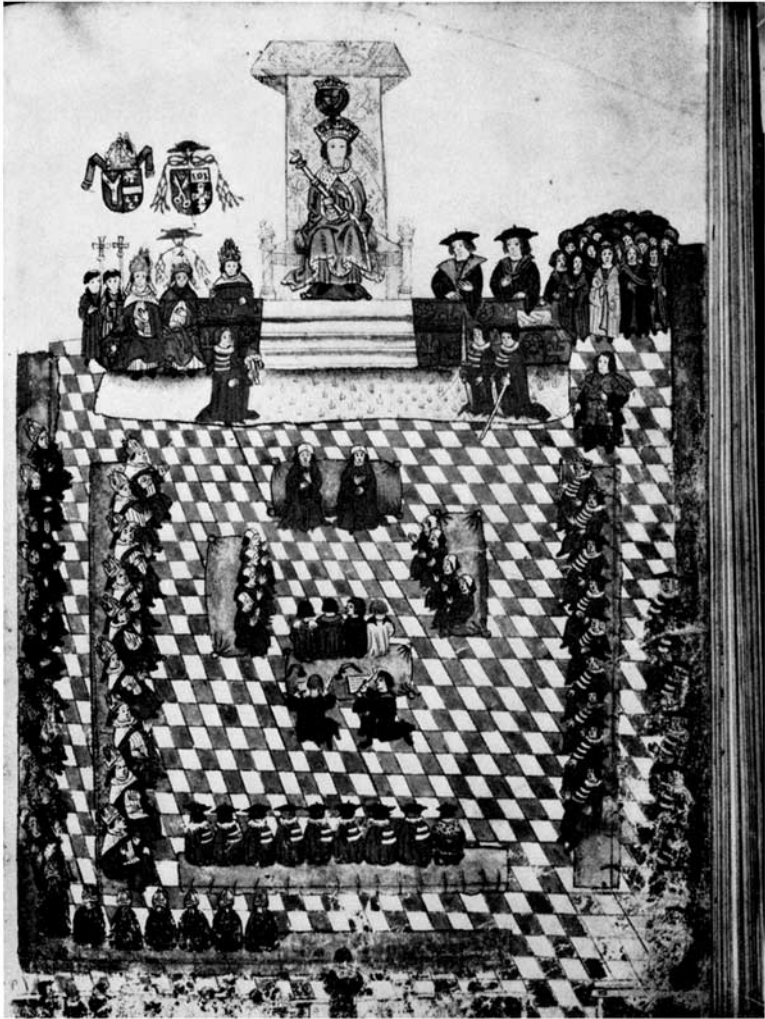
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# THE REFORMATION PARLIAMENT 1529–1536

STANFORD E. LEHMBERG

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## PREFACE

The Reformation Parliament, which met in seven sessions during the years from 1529–1536, was clearly one of the most important assemblies ever to gather in England. Pickthorn may have exaggerated when he called it ‘the most important Parliament in English history’:<sup>1</sup> the Long Parliament of the seventeenth century and that which passed the great Reform Bill of 1832 are obvious competitors for such recognition. But Bishop Stubbs wrote that the Reformation Parliament, ‘both on account of its length and for the importance of its acts, may deserve the title of the Long Parliament of Henry VIII’,<sup>2</sup> while Froude believed its work to be ‘of larger moment politically and spiritually than the achievements of the Long Parliament itself’.<sup>3</sup>

The chief work to which Froude referred was, of course, Parliament’s rejection of papal authority in England, thus establishing the independence of the Anglican Church and opening the way for Henry VIII’s divorce and remarriage. But although Parliament’s primary concern may have been for regulation of the Church, other matters did not escape its attention. Indeed its economic, social, and legal reforms would have earned prominence for the Parliament had it never passed an ecclesiastical measure. Further, this intense activity effected a change in the nature of Parliament itself, giving it ‘a permanent place of political importance and, so to speak, finally incorporat[ing] it in the English system of government’.<sup>4</sup>

It may seem surprising that so significant a Parliament has not before now received thorough study. Some work has of course been done, particularly by G. R. Elton and the late A. F. Pollard, who was engaged in collecting material relating to the Parliament at the time of his death. Perhaps other historians

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Pickthorn, *Early Tudor Government: Henry VIII*, 133.

<sup>2</sup> William Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History and Kindred Subjects*, 269.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Froude, *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, I, 191.

<sup>4</sup> G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, 229.

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have been deterred by the lack of adequate documentation. There is no Journal of the Commons, whose records begin only in 1547. The Lords' Journals are incomplete and in any case of limited usefulness. No private diaries, and only a handful of letters mentioning Parliament, survive. There is, fortunately, considerable parliamentary material in the *Chronicle* of Edward Hall, himself a member of the Commons, and the dispatches of the ubiquitous Spanish ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, yield valuable if sometimes misunderstood or distorted information. His original dispatches have been consulted throughout this study; they provide a somewhat fuller account than the summaries in the *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, or *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, through which most historians have known the envoy's reports. These dispatches, preserved in the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, are referred to in the notes that follow as Chapuys MSS.; they are written in French, with considerable use of cipher, fortunately decoded in the margin at the time of receipt. Drafts of bills have been utilized to show the various stages through which important pieces of legislation passed and the hands which worked on them. Few of these are dated. I have fitted them together as seemed most probable, but I would readily concede that other interpretations and datings are possible. The original acts preserved in the House of Lords Record Office show, among other things, which House of Parliament first passed each bill and what provisos were added. Finally, the statutes of the Parliament constitute its principal memorial. They are readily available in the printed *Statutes of the Realm* but have been infrequently read and inadequately used. Even when all these sources are carefully studied the Parliament remains a jig-saw puzzle with half the pieces missing. I have thought it better to see what can be done with these inadequate materials than to abandon the Parliament, but readers are warned not to expect the sort of racy day-to-day narrative produced by Sir John Neale for Elizabeth's Parliaments. Henry VIII's will never provide that.

Although I have been more concerned with the activities and accomplishments of Parliament than with a Namierite analysis of its membership, I have devoted some attention to its composition. Biographical information concerning members of the Commons is being collected by the History of Parliament Trust in associa-

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tion with the Institute of Historical Research, London. I am grateful to Professor S. T. Bindoff, editor of the early Tudor section of the *History of Parliament*, and to Mr E. L. C. Mullins, secretary to the editorial board, for allowing me to examine the draft biographies which were written before 1963, and to Dr R. J. W. Swales for assistance in locating them. For several reasons I did not feel that I could ask for a subsequent renewal of this privilege, but I have been able to collect considerable further information on my own. Material which I have taken from the typescript drafts at the History of Parliament Trust is clearly identified in the footnotes by the symbol H.P.T. Since I believe one of the failings of much recent parliamentary history to be neglect of the House of Lords, I have devoted a chapter to its composition. The Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, which met concurrently with Parliament and was involved in considerable interplay with the two Houses, also receives some analysis and has been brought into the narratives where appropriate.

My aim throughout the narrative chapters has been to give a full, balanced picture of the Parliament's work, as if seen through the eyes of the members themselves. I have therefore mentioned virtually all the statutes passed during these years. No doubt a more selective approach, such as Neale used, would have produced a more palatable book, but I thought it would be false to convey a one-sided, distorted view of parliamentary activity and accomplishments. As a further means of attempting to recreate the feeling of the participants I have quoted liberally from the sources. In most cases I have retained their original spelling, although I have made punctuation, capitalization, and the use of i and j, u and v conform to modern practice. Occasionally I have corrected silently what I take to be errors in the original. Modernized spelling is used in all quotations from the statutes themselves, primarily because variations exist in the originals: the printed *Statutes of the Realm* reproduce the spelling of the Parliament Rolls, but the original acts at the House of Lords Record Office differ considerably in orthography. It seemed pointless to collate the two and hardly justifiable to adopt one version over the other. I regret that the footnotes are so cumbersome. Since virtually all quotations are from the manuscript sources I have necessarily cited the manuscripts, but I have also



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thought that scholars who do not have access to the original papers should be given a reference to the summary in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* or one of the other Calendars of State Papers, if such a summary exists. This practice has doubled the length of many notes, but I hope that it may prove more useful than manuscript citations alone.

A considerable portion of this study was completed while I held fellowships granted by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the University of Texas Research Institute. Only those who have tried to write while beset by the pressure of classes and committees will appreciate the extent of my gratitude. My debts to others are many. The Clerk of the Records, Mr M. F. Bond, and his assistants Mr Stevens and Mr Cobb treated me with unusual courtesy during my days at the House of Lords Record Office. Dr Rath, then general director of the Vienna archives, and Mr Wing, assistant librarian of Christ Church, Oxford, kindly arranged for the microfilming of documents in their care. I have, as always, received efficient and co-operative attention at the British Museum and Public Record Office, as well as at the University Libraries in Austin, Cambridge, and London. I am particularly grateful to Professor Elton for his careful comments on an earlier draft of my work. Finally, I thank my students and family for their help and forbearance while this study was in progress.

S. E. L.

*Austin, Texas*  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A.H.R.*: *American Historical Review*  
*B.I.H.R.*: *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*  
*B.M.*: British Museum  
*C.C. 306*: Christ Church, Oxford, MS. 306  
*Chapuis MS.*: Manuscript dispatches of Eustace Chapuis, in  
 Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Staatenabteilung  
 England, Karton 4, 5, 7  
*C.S.P., Milan*: *Calendar of State Papers, Milan*  
*C.S.P., Spn.*: *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*  
*C.S.P., Venetian*: *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*  
*D.N.B.*: *Dictionary of National Biography*  
*E.H.R.*: *English Historical Review*  
*G.E.C.*: G. E. C[okayne], *The Complete Peerage*, new ed.  
*H.P.T.*: History of Parliament Trust  
*L.J.*: *Journals of the House of Lords*  
*L.P.*: *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*  
*P.R.O.*: Public Record Office  
*S.R.*: *Statutes of the Realm*  
*S.T.C.*: numbered items listed in A. W. Pollard and G. R.  
 Redgrave, *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books, 1475-1640*  
*T.R.H.S.*: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

Unless otherwise stated all references in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* and in the various *Calendars of State Papers* are to item numbers rather than page numbers.

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## Counties and Boroughs represented in the Reformation Parliament

Counties are shown in *italic*. Boroughs are numbered within each county to correspond to numbers on the map. See at foot for key to the Cinque Ports, shown by the letters A–G on the map.

*Bedfordshire*

1. Bedford

*Berkshire*

1. Reading
2. Wallingford
3. Windsor

*Buckinghamshire*

1. Buckingham
2. High Wycombe

*Cambridgeshire*

1. Cambridge

*Cheshire**Cornwall*

1. Bodmin
2. Dunheved
3. Helston
4. Launceston
5. Liskeard
6. Lostwithiel
7. Truro

*Cumberland*

1. Carlisle

*Derbyshire*

1. Derby

*Devonshire*

1. Barnstaple
2. Dartmouth
3. Exeter
4. Plymouth
5. Plympton
6. Tavistock
7. Totnes

*Dorset*

1. Bridport
2. Dorchester
3. Lyme Regis
4. Melcombe Regis
5. Poole
6. Shaftesbury
7. Wareham
8. Weymouth

*Durham**Essex*

1. Colchester
2. Maldon

*Gloucestershire*

1. Bristol
2. Gloucester

*Hampshire*

1. Portsmouth
2. Southampton
3. Winchester

*Herefordshire*

1. Hereford
2. Leominster

*Hertfordshire*

1. Huntingdon

*Kent*

1. Canterbury
2. Rochester

*Lancashire*

1. Lancaster
2. Preston

*Leicestershire*

1. Leicester

*Lincolnshire*

1. Grantham
2. Grimsby
3. Lincoln
4. Stamford

*London and Middlesex*

1. London

*Norfolk*

1. Bishop's Lynn
2. Norwich
3. Thetford
4. Yarmouth

*Northamptonshire*

1. Northampton

*Northumberland*

1. Berwick
2. Newcastle-on-Tyne

*Nottinghamshire*

1. Nottingham

*Oxfordshire*

1. Oxford

*Rutland**Shropshire*

1. Bridgnorth
2. Ludlow
3. Shrewsbury
4. Wenlock

*Somerset*

1. Bath
2. Bridgwater
3. Taunton
4. Wells

*Staffordshire*

1. Newcastle-under-Lyme
2. Stafford

*Suffolk*

1. Dunwich
2. Ipswich
3. Orford

*Surrey*

1. Blechingly
2. Gatton
3. Guildford
4. Reigate
5. Southwark

*Sussex*

1. Arundel
2. Bramber
3. Chichester
4. East Grinstead
5. Horsham
6. Lewes
7. Midhurst
8. Shoreham
9. Steyning

*Warwickshire*

1. Coventry
2. Warwick

*Westmorland*

1. Appleby

*Wiltshire*

1. Bedwin
2. Calne
3. Chippenham
4. Cricklade



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- 5. Devizes
- 6. Downton
- 7. Heytesbury
- 8. Hindon
- 9. Ludgershall
- 10. Malmesbury
- 11. Marlborough
- 12. Old Sarum
- 13. Salisbury
- 14. Westbury
- 15. Wilton
- 16. Wotton Bassett

*Worcestershire*

- 1. Worcester

*Yorkshire*

- 1. Kingston-on-Hull
- 2. Scarborough
- 3. York

*Cinque Ports*

- A. Dover
- B. Hastings
- C. Hythe
- D. Romney
- E. Rye
- F. Sandwich
- G. Winchelsea

