In the ancient English university town of Cambridge at the opening of the sixteenth century was an inconspicuous place of public entertainment known as the White Horse Inn. This hostelry stood back from the High Street, not far from Queen’s College and separated from King’s by the narrow filth of Plute’s Lane. It had the advantage for certain purposes of being off the beaten track. Those wishing to enter unobserved might approach it, particularly in the dark of night, from the rear along the Backs where flowed the silent Cam, and slip in by a side door. To a number of alert Cambridge students who were discussing new and forbidden ideas in 1521, the White Horse Inn was a convenient gathering place for clandestine meetings.

For ten years there had been increasing intellectual curiosity at the University about the new concepts which were destined to change much in English life. The Dutch teacher Erasmus, who had been in residence at Queen’s for three fruitful years, had opened the minds of many who heard his lectures on the meaning of the New Testament. These followers of Erasmus undertook to read the Bible with new understanding and inspiration. Recently, the more revolutionary ideas preached by Luther had come out of Germany, and his writings had become a center of discussion. Since the German preachments attacked the government and practices of the Church, Henry VIII, who was not only King of England but also Defender of the Faith, refused to tolerate such heresies. Luther’s works, therefore, had been burned at St. Paul’s in London in May, 1521, and not long after, during the Easter term, at Cambridge. Cambridge scholars were forbidden to read Luther’s books.

But ideas were not easily killed in Cambridge. A vigorous group among the scholars and students were East Anglians, who had come across the fens and broads from Norfolk and Suffolk, bringing with them a sturdy atmosphere of independence and turbulence. Some had come from the cathedral city of Norwich.
Norwich, the capital of Norfolk, was encircled by a low range of hills in the valley of the Wensom where the river Yare joins its kindred stream. Even as late as the thirteenth century the city still stood at the head of a great estuary to which vessels put in from the German ocean. It was a natural landing place for Dutch and German traders and in earlier days had been the favorite approach of Teutonic invaders.

Dominated by its magnificent cathedral, and protected by its castle, Norwich had lived a feverish, frequently disturbed existence. For East Anglia, stretching out into the German ocean and separated from the rest of the realm by marshes and fenlands, was a corner far removed from most of England. The inhabitants of this region had been conditioned by their danger and their isolation into a headstrong and truculent people. Indeed, its lords had made it even more remote by building across the narrow isthmus of firm, dry land connecting it with England a great rampart, called the Devil’s Dyke.

Religious and political activity were pronounced in East Anglia—it was said that there was a church in Norwich for every week in the year. Outside the city in a hollow beneath the hill on which St. Leonard’s Priory stood was a spot known as the Lollard’s Pit, where religious reformers had been martyred by fire. It was at Norwich, too, that Wat Tyler had raised his standard of revolt. The students from this enterprising and vital society who came across the fenland to Cambridge were not men to give up ideas merely because of royal fiat.

Norfolk men from Corpus, from Trinity Hall, and from Gonville’s College picked their way silently in the dark through “detestable and filthy” Plute’s Lane to enter the White Horse Inn by the hidden door. Here in “Little Germany,” as it was called, under the chairmanship of a Norfolk cleric, Robert Barnes, prior of the community of Augustan friars at Cambridge, they discussed the new religious concepts. The Norfolk men were prepared for these ideas, since some of them had already received an indoctrination from German merchants, supercargoes, and ship captains who put into Great Yarmouth and came on to Norwich. They were also aware that the Oxford scholar Tyndale was working on an English translation of the Bible, and it is possible that Tyndale may have visited with them. Thus they were ready to talk, and the more they talked over the
newly interpreted words of the Gospels, the more they realized how far the Church had departed from them. There must be reform, they concluded, well knowing that the whole force of hierarchy, government, and social inertia would be against them. One of the youths who left the White Horse charged with the burning impress of new ideas to return to Norwich was known affectionately as “Little Bilney.”

In his home county Bilney sought to distribute the New Testament in English and went among the people sharing his revolutionary thoughts. His superior, Bishop Nix, could tolerate no such activity, and in 1531 brave Bilney was burned to death in the Lollard’s Pit. But the flames that destroyed Bilney’s body, however, lighted another torch that was to flare so all could see.

Once again the spirit of religious zeal for reform was abroad—heresy, some called it—like that which had last been stirred by the Lollards in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The White Horse Inn gatherings had counterparts elsewhere; the spirit of Lollardy driven underground began to respond, and other fires were set. All told, these primarily religious influences were to open a new epoch in political behavior.

In this era to come, society was to participate in its own governance on a grander scale than men had heretofore dreamed. The power of those governing was to be limited and directed by public opinion to a degree hitherto unknown. The will of a haphazard variety of citizens of high and low degree was to be expressed and recorded by mechanisms which were constantly to be adjusted, augmented, and rebuilt, which were ever to be the object of restudy and experiment, particularly by those who sought devices that might more accurately capture and record the popular will. The right of humble individuals who had no claim to distinction to express opinions about those in power and to have a voice not only in shaping their policies, but also in determining whether they were to continue to exercise power, although not altogether a new concept in the world, had hardly been experimented with in any large population. Experiments were now to begin on a grand scale.

This democratic ideal burst forth in England with some force in the sixteenth century and was re-emphasized at a time and under conditions which permitted experiment in the America just discovered. The
active, inquiring scholars from East Anglia, gathered around their table in the Cambridge inn, represented an attitude which was to become more frequently discernible in England in the sixteenth century and to which American Democracy was to owe much of its essential quality.

What these men were investigating, clothed as it was in religious terms, was a new concept of the relation of the individual to society—a concept which would shortly involve the question of the nature and power of government and the source of its authority. A new politics based upon new types of thought and action was in the making. The extent to which new institutional concepts and behavior patterns could be experimented with was enlarged, yet at the same time it was limited by the characteristics of English politics. It was eventually realized that the full force of these ideas and attitudes could be developed only in an environment in which institutions were less crystallized than in England. America was to prove a convenient laboratory.

II

The ideas discussed by the scholars at the White Horse and circulated by men like Bilney were of revolutionary purport. In reality, they questioned, if not too apparently, the long-accepted pattern of English social order and aroused antagonistic and divisive attitudes. The resulting controversy was to create a new political behavior, the central mechanism of which would be a kind of democratic partisanship. Ideas emphasizing the independence, the worth, and the equality of individuals as children of God and joint heirs with Christ, challenged the prevailing modes of political and social thought and organization. For English society had long been stratified, each man born to a station in which he was supposed to remain. It was intended that he accept his lot and follow the ancient patterns which divided classes into the elite and the unprivileged.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy played a leading part among the elite because the Church was the accepted master of man's conduct and could prescribe his destiny; the Church was even more implanted in his life than the government. By confession, penance, and admonition, the Church did much to define his status in this life and assign it in the next. Through the seven sacraments the Church kept inti-
mate watch over his life from birth to death. He was to worship the mystery of the Trinity and give implicit obedience to the priesthood; between God and man were the hierarchy, the images, the vestments, the incense, the Latin chants—even His Word was kept in Latin. Man could gain access to God only through intercession.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, many Englishmen were dissatisfied with this religious situation. As they became increasingly aware of the New Learning and humanism of the Renaissance and the new exaltation of the independence and capacity of man, they became less inclined to their subordinate status. Other dissatisfaction, however, were more concrete and less subtle: the clergy too often were lax in their behavior and careless of their responsibilities; some clergymen, particularly those in monasteries, had acquired great wealth and had capital hoards as well as landed estates. Corrupt and surfeited with wealth, the Church was believed by some to be unworthy of its social power and influence. Furthermore, churchmen, bound to Rome, were often foremost in government. Much English money went to Rome, and English foreign policy and even domestic affairs were shaped for the interests of the Papacy. The Church, therefore, seemed to frustrate or hinder at least three concepts of the day—humanism, capitalism, and nationalism.

Change of some sort became inevitable, and Henry VIII was shrewd enough to realize it and turn it to his advantage. A little more than a decade after the burning of the books and the White Horse meetings, the Crown and Parliament sufficiently associated themselves with the Lutheran revolt to nationalize the Church, assume control of its organization, and seize much of its property. But the English government paid little heed to the doctrinal controversies which were so much a part of the Protestant revolt in western Europe, and left matters of doctrine and liturgy much as they had been under the Roman order. It was in this field, however, that those who were not content with limited changes began to challenge the government.

Too many were familiar with the ideas of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and other leaders of the Continental Reformation to be satisfied with the narrow limits of the doctrinal changes which the English government had made in the first half of the century. Opportunity for any further progress altered decidedly, however, when Mary ascended
the throne and sought to restore the Church to its full Roman relationship. So intense was her zeal that several hundred Protestants who refused to accept the old order were burned at the stake. Many of the leaders of the Henrician and Edwardian reforms migrated to the Continent to mobilize and plan at Frankfurt, Zurich, Geneva and elsewhere. Others went "underground" to organize "resistance." But upon Mary's death and the accession of Elizabeth, the political potentialities of the religious situation began to be realized.

During the Marian exile many gained experience in new and independent forms of church organization and government. One group had established a congregation at the Weissfrauenkirche in Frankfurt, another at Strassburg. In Zurich a third group of leaders had lived in Pastor Bullinger's manse under the shadow of the Grossmünster. At Geneva others had listened to Calvin preach at the great cathedral, or had listened to their own ministers, notably John Knox, at the Temple de l'Auditoire close by. They had corresponded, visited, counseled, engaged in controversy, and some had written propaganda books which had a furtive circulation in England. They had openly questioned royal authority and justified popular resistance to tyranny. John Ponet, erstwhile Bishop of Winchester, published *A Short Treatise of Politike Power*. Christopher Goodman wrote *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyd*, which seconded and re-enforced Ponet's argument, and John Knox blew his *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. The more radical of the exiles had worked out a new church organization, in which pastors and elders were to have much more importance in the general governance of the English Church and presumably much more freedom of action in ordering the form of worship. Preaching was to supersede liturgy in importance. The exiles were eagerly awaiting the day when they might return to England to admonish a new sovereign and to advise how best to put their ideas into effect; they expected the chief seats in a new hierarchy which would "Genevate" the Church of England.

No sooner had word of Mary's death reached the Protestant cities on the Continent than the exiles hurried back to England hoping to receive from Elizabeth the authority to set up their new order. Their plan—a basic constitutional change—was to diminish the royal power and the authority of the bishops in matters ecclesiastical. But
Elizabeth was her father’s daughter; she was of no mind to tolerate such radical changes.

She was, indeed, in a difficult position. Her father’s excesses, her brother’s minority reign, her sister’s religious and matrimonial alliance with Rome and Spain had all weakened popular confidence in the throne. The monarchy was shaky. Elizabeth knew that vigorous religious reorganization, such as the exiles had in mind, would stir up strife which she could ill afford. Hence, she realized she must act with caution. She herself had slight interest in religion, but she well understood that she had to maintain her own place and strengthen her power in religious matters. She realized also that placing the parishes in charge of independent priests and elders would take from her hands valuable instruments of government and would create a situation which might be difficult, if not impossible, for her and her bishops to control.

As soon as Elizabeth was proclaimed Queen in November, 1558, a battle of propaganda began. The restored Roman bishops of Mary’s reign had anticipated what was coming and had sought to organize against it. At Mary’s funeral one of her prelates had warned the throng that “The wolves be coming out of Geneva ... and have sent their books before, full of pestilent doctrines, blasphemy and heresy, to infect the people.”1 The Roman bishops and their priests continued earnest in their preaching. Other priests who wished for a return of the Edwardian liturgy urged a middle way, while the returning exiles and the emerging underground forces sought a new order. Nor was preaching confined to the churches. Religious enthusiasts without parishes or pulpits, “gospellers,” as they were called, were exhorting wherever they could gain a circle of listeners. Elizabeth, fully realizing the danger of this, decided that Parliament, not the pulpit, was to be the forum. In December, by royal proclamation, she forbade preaching; religious services were to be solely liturgical for the time being. Forthwith she summoned Parliament.

Like her father, Elizabeth was clever in understanding the uses of Parliament. When that body met she discovered that there was in the Commons a strong exile group ardently interested in the effort to Genevate the Church. On the other hand, she found a Catholic party in the House of Lords where Mary’s bishops attended in force.

Elizabeth moved skillfully to secure the repeal of the return to Rome, which Mary had obtained after so much difficulty. English nationalism wanted no Romish control. The Queen would have been content merely to restore things as her father had left them, but, pushed by the exiles, she had to accept provisions which acknowledged her as Supreme Governor of the Church, not its Supreme Head, and an Act of Uniformity prescribing a new English prayer book. A bill which would have enabled Elizabeth to restore those bishops and priests who had been deprived of their positions during Mary's day failed by reason, probably, of the Catholic influence in the House of Lords.

Despite this compromise, Elizabeth did gain the ecclesiastical power which her father had had, but she was cautious in using it. She contented herself with sending commissioners throughout England to administer the oath, which, of course, could not be taken by Mary's Catholic leaders, although most of the lesser clergy accepted it. Elizabeth now could begin to appoint her bishops. Once again the word was caution, and men of moderate views willing to co-operate with the Queen received the most important positions.

The moderate policy of the Crown and Parliament was a grievous disappointment to many. Those sharing the ideas of the exiles refused to be content and began a course of action which was to have repercussions decidedly political in character. Controversy over policy, over basic institutional patterns, was going to permeate the realm.

III

Each parish in this period became a potential seat of controversy in which religion and politics were thoroughly intermingled. The institution of religion was so vitally connected with the life of most people in every community that almost everyone had an opinion about it and expressed it. Undoubtedly in some parishes the Church became a center of debate and of something akin to politics, for the essence of politics is the expression of opinion about power and policy governing the behavior of society. Many Englishmen had something to say and did not believe in hiding their lights under bushels.

Although the theme of the controversy was religious, it was also markedly political, because there was no very clear distinction be-
tween state and church. In fact, so closely were they connected that
the parish was the fundamental unit and instrument both of civil
government and ecclesiastical polity. The Church of God was not
only the seat of worship, it was also, in the rural districts at least, the
seat of government. There the vestry meetings were held, there the
churchwardens assessed some of the local taxes. Then, too, other
religious institutions—the priories, monasteries, chantries and guilds
—had been an integral part of the civic life of the people. Charity
had been dispensed, sickness cared for, and recreation provided by
these agencies; people had looked to them so long for so much.

Now basic changes were in process. Monasteries, chantries, and
guilds had been disbanded. The Church had been nationalized.
There were new ideas about the service. Many were no longer inter-
ested in adoring mysteries and blindly obeying priestly injunctions:
they had begun reading the Bible, now available in English; they
wanted to hear expository preaching. All told, there was much to
talk about, and most of it was controversial. Naturally, it was to
be in the parish that the greater part of this controversy was to take
place. Something very like politics began to permeate the vestry.

The center of the most active controversy was the nature of the
church service. Should the images be torn out, should candles and
incense be abandoned? Should the altar become a communion table
and be placed in the center of the church? Should the rood and screen
be pulled down and the crucifix laid aside? Should the priests aban-
don vestments? Should they preach more? All these questions pro-
duced differences of opinion, and when it came time to choose the
churchwardens, there might well be contests dictated by such differ-
ences of opinion.

It must not be forgotten that the questions of who should direct
vestry policy and who should be churchwardens were coming to mean
more in community life just about this time. Originally, vestries had
merely managed the minutiae of keeping the church in repair, of
providing proper vestments and supplies for the service. For these
expenses the churchwardens had levied rates or taxes, but now new
functions were added. When the monasteries and charitable guilds
were eliminated by the government, those who had taken care of the
poor were deprived of their means. Furthermore, such economic
policies as enclosing small farms to make sheep pastures and debasing
the coinage had caused unemployment, higher prices, and more poverty. Some new provision had to be made for poor relief, and in Elizabeth's reign this responsibility was assigned to the parishes. The churchwardens and the justices of the peace were now required to support the unfortunate by assessment. The parishes were also given the new obligation of maintaining highways. Thus the churchwardens and vestrymen became economically as well as religiously responsible, and ambitions for securing these offices may have become more active.

The center of parish discussion and often its leader was, of course, the clergyman. Here, too, was to be found a diversity of opinion. The decades since the first new religious policies instituted by Henry VIII's government had witnessed a considerable change in the personnel of the clergy: some had fled, others had been forced out of their offices, and, more important, perhaps, fewer young men had undertaken to enter the priesthood. Thus when a parish priest died, there was frequently no successor at hand. There was, in fact, in the early days of Elizabeth's reign, such a dearth of clergymen that "many of the laity who were competently learned, and of sobriety and good religion, were appointed to read the service in the churches." This opened the way for more lay participation in parish governance; often laymen were moved to preach and to give their views on the controversial issues of order and doctrine. Elizabeth, as we have seen, soon forbade them to preach, but their zeal was not always bound by this order.

Early in Elizabeth's reign a number of the exiles resumed their livings and sought to lead their parishioners in the new ways. Some of them appeared without vestments and used the Geneva prayer book. Their activities were encouraged during the 1560's when a number of French Huguenots and Dutch Protestants fled from the Continent and brought their experiences to aid the parishioners. Many of the new Tudor nobility and country gentlemen, rivals of the old Catholic families, were in sympathy with the religious changes, and as they had "livings" to bestow, gave them to clergymen and divinity students of Geneva sympathy. Upon occasion there was tumult and forceful expression.

2 Ibid., 203.
In tempestuous Norwich these differences of opinion reached such a pitch that in the cathedral itself five of the prebendaries put on an antiritual demonstration, marched into the choir, shouted down the singers and finally broke up the organ. At another time a Puritan student fresh from Cambridge got up in the midst of evensong and read a new form of service. The controversy was heightened by the fact that the local country gentry in Norfolk did not like Puritanism, which they associated with the influx of foreigners into Norwich, there being 4,000 Flemings in the town. An antiforeign conspiracy was begun to drive them out.

Now and then “crazy” prophets rode the streets of Norwich claiming to speak God’s messages. Anabaptists and members of a sect known as the Family of Love were fervent in their professions, opposing baptism of children and proclaiming that the godly could not sin. Other sectarians appeared who went so far as to advocate communism in goods and disbelief in sin and the law.

All this variety of new doctrine and custom was arousing widespread popular interest, giving people opinions which they were increasingly intent upon expressing. There was, consequently, a greater determination to increase the activity of laymen in parish government. The civil magistrates, well aware of this trend, realized that the new popular interest in government was a force to be reckoned with. The magistrates found themselves frequently in a strange position, because in many instances they were endeavoring to take over functions which had hitherto belonged to ecclesiastical courts. Some of their perquisites also brought them into close association with church vestries, since the magistrates as local gentry often possessed the right to appoint priests to local parishes. Parishes themselves were gaining more power over the appointment of their clergymen. Occasionally, influential parishioners purchased the right to bestow livings from local landholders. In other cases, parish authorities assumed such rights on the ground that the right recently held by neighboring abbeys had lapsed when those foundations had been abolished by Henry VIII. Such enterprising and independent parishes were usually interested in appointing priests of the new school.

Parish independence and increased lay participation in management and discussion were encouraged by a new feature appearing in
this troubled time. The lack of educated clergy had led certain of the authorities in cathedrals and large town parishes to organize discussion groups to which the less-educated clergy and interested laymen might come for information, scriptural interpretation, or religious doctrine. This activity was called “prophesying.” Frequently, on some weekdays, large groups of interested people from the surrounding region would come in to listen or to ask questions. This procedure naturally encouraged expression, argument, and controversy. Before long the implications of such free discussion became disturbing, and Elizabeth and some of her bishops tried to discourage it. But it was too congenial to those who were becoming increasingly articulate on religion, and some of the bishops and many clerics encouraged the practice. These prophesyings strengthened the Puritan tendency to manage parish affairs locally, upon occasion in defiance of central authority.

But local enterprise went farther than this. The old practice of operating underground in complete independence was continued. Groups who were dissatisfied with local parish conditions seceded, and Elizabeth had only been seven years on the throne when independent organization began. The custom during the terror of Mary of meeting in private houses or secular buildings was resumed; people formed their own organizations, elected their officers, chose their pastors, and drafted covenants or constitutions. Such clandestine groups were illegal and invited punishment, but their members were not afraid of being sent to jail. Later in Elizabeth’s reign they suffered banishment and some were even burned to death. These liberals had the intelligence, the faith, and the courage for independent action.

A great divisive issue was before the English people, an issue of more general appeal than any other since the Norman Conquest. This issue was charged with all kinds of emotional power, involving not only questions of intimate personal concern in this world, but in the next as well. Could government compose this issue by law, administrative practice, and influence? Government had tried several experiments since the issue was presented, but to date none had succeeded very long. There are certain popular attitudes which do not yield readily to government fiat.
The ensuing struggle was to be fought out not only in the parishes, but it was to rise constantly in Parliament and create new patterns of political behavior in that body. The arrangement which Elizabeth worked out with her first Parliament was too moderate to satisfy the new zealots. Those who desired more fundamental changes, even though they concentrated their first efforts in the parishes, were inevitably going to raise the issue again in Parliament. Those who wished greater changes naturally sought a hearing in the national law-making body.

The method of parliamentary election in Elizabeth's time was still simple. The shire representatives were elected by all those males who possessed a forty-shilling freehold, and they came together at the call of the sheriff at the shire hall in the county town and there voted viva voce. As a matter of fact, local noblemen and country gentlemen generally nominated these "knights of the shire," there was seldom a contest, and all an election amounted to was a shout of approval by a few freeholders.

On the rare occasions when there was a contest it generally arose from local rivalry among the country gentry. Then, as in feudal days, the freeholders would rally around rival family standards as contesting landholders, who felt that the family honor was at stake, made their appeals. Such contests were often the expression of ancient feuds.

Some embryonic political methods had been developed. Although there was a prejudice against open canvassing, there was some discreet letter writing. Upon occasion a committee might be formed which would seek to enlist the interest of various men of standing and influence. Some candidates had friends and agents who went among the freeholders, threatening dispossession of their houses if they did not vote as they should. Outsiders could be brought in; a gentleman from a neighboring shire might come over with followers. Then, too, voters could be made by giving individuals small parcels of land on the understanding that they would relinquish them after the day of the election.

The climax of such politics came on election day. Since voting was done only in the shire town, freeholders had to come in to the shire
hall where the election was held at eight in the morning. Because of
the early hour, it was necessary at times to find lodging and board
for those who must come far, and a wise candidate would hire an inn
to see that his retainers had a place to eat and sleep. If the agent of
one could secure all the inn accommodations, he had a great ad-
vantage. That shire halls were generally small presented another
hazard. On election day each side tried to secure possession of its
limited space; when the sheriff put the names, the viva voce response
for the one controlling the hall would be overwhelming. Again, if the
sheriff was favorable to a candidate, his influence might be the decid-
ing factor, for when the result appeared to be close, the sheriff was
supposed to poll the crowd. Each man had to give his name, his
vote, and, if challenged, swear that he was worth at least forty
shillings. Sheriffs were even known to adjourn elections and recon-
vene them in unexpected locations or to falsify returns. This sort of
politics was not typical, for contests were rare, but such things did
happen.

Election procedures in the shires were not duplicated in the bor-
oughs. Custom, in fact, varied from borough to borough, and any
description which implies uniformity is misleading. There was not
even any common definition of a voter. The democratic procedures
which seemed to be emerging in some boroughs during the later
Middle Ages had quite generally given way to oligarchic control. The
borough government composed of local magistrates sitting usually as
two houses frequently chose the members of Parliament. These coun-
cils, which had originally been elected either by popular assemblies or
by the trade guilds, had for the most part become close corporations
which filled vacancies as they occurred. It had therefore become the
custom in many such towns for the mayor and council to choose the
members of Parliament without reference to popular will. On occa-
sion their procedure might be complex. In one borough, for instance,
the mayor named four burgesses. These four named four more, and
the eight then named an additional four. In turn, these twelve men—
six aldermen and six members from the lower house—chose two
members of Parliament, usually from among the members of the
borough council.

Thus the choice of members of Parliament rested largely in the
hands of local magnates either in country or town. With the rise of
religious differences, their opinions had great weight; the Queen and her ministers realized full well that they must be sure of the support of these local leaders. Members of the royal council cultivated them, particularly after Puritans began to appear in Parliament, and cabinet members undertook to correspond with men of local influence, seeking their support for favored candidates.

When candidates were returned favorable to the Queen’s interest, they exercised their functions under ministerial direction. Puritan members found themselves frustrated, since the Crown prepared the agenda and could and did forbid the consideration of Puritan measures. Nothing like an Opposition to the Crown was tolerated in Parliament in the early years of Elizabeth’s reign. But Peter Wentworth and William (?) Strickland resented her prohibition and protested. Strickland was for a time excluded from the House by the Privy Council, and Wentworth more than once went to the Tower. They and their friends took on some semblance of a party, and although they secured little legislation, they did finally secure some status in the course of Elizabeth’s reign. In the end, the Queen recognized an Opposition and tolerated it sufficiently to allow members to speak against royal policy.

The growth of the Puritan movement saw an increase of Puritan influence in Parliament, which was aided even by the government itself. From the beginning of her reign there had been an important group of the Queen’s advisers friendly to religious reform—men like Burghley, Walsingham, and others, many of them men who had recently risen in rank and fortune. The older families and the nobility tended to remain Catholic, but those whom Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth had ennobled and often enriched from the confiscated property of the Church, were apt to be Protestant, and, as events developed, tended to show Puritan interest. A group of Elizabeth’s advisers had a sympathy for the Puritans which she herself entirely lacked. This support was significant where the question of Parliamentary support for Puritan measures was concerned. Since many constituencies could be persuaded by prominent members of the government circle to accept candidates named by them, this practice served to increase the size of the Puritan bloc and to give it a sense of importance and security.
V

Despite this advantage, however, it was evident that the Puritan interest in Parliament would usually be helpless against the Queen's command. Consequently, the Puritans realized that they would have to operate independently of Parliament. They therefore proceeded to organize to reform religion within the parishes, despite the Queen's displeasure and without benefit of political sanction. On a realm-wide basis they used techniques of planning, promoting, propaganda and organization which look surprisingly like modern political methods. In effect they were unconsciously creating a political organization for ostensibly nonpolitical purposes and were developing habits of behavior which their descendants were to find useful in America.

This tendency to organize and, in effect, to form parties had begun on the Continent. Among the English exiles, particularly in Frankfurt, there had been an Episcopal faction and a reform faction. Although the reformers had been defeated in Frankfurt and some of them had gone to Geneva, those at Zurich and Strassburg took vital interest in their differences of opinion and at times attempted either to arbitrate or direct them. When they returned to England at Elizabeth's succession, the exiles did not forget what they had learned.

Some of these men were still living in 1572 when the Puritans began to organize, and one of them, Anthony Gilby, became a leader in the Puritan campaign. He with John Field, Thomas Wilcox, and several others met in London during the session of Parliament to frame and promote legislation and to organize support for it. They urged a Presbyterian form of church government in which clergymen and elders would manage the parishes and send delegates to synods which would in turn rule the Church. Their principal item of propaganda was a pamphlet, *An Admonition to the Parliament*, which obtained wide circulation and stimulated replies in similar form from the Anglican hierarchy. This central committee organized correspondence and encouraged the formation of synods or classes which some of the enthusiasts had already experimented with along Genevan lines. For their temerity, some, including Field, went to jail. But behind the walls of Newgate Prison Field continued to act as a kind of national secretary of the party and to direct propaganda.
These men accomplished nothing in Parliament at the time, but their efforts in some localities bore fruit.

For ten years they labored manfully and by 1583 were ready for a new trial of strength. In that year, shortly after the Puritan-Presbyterians were able to hold their first general conference at Cambridge, their talents were stimulated by a new move on the part of the Queen. Elizabeth had appointed John Whitgift, sometime Master of Trinity and Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583. He had been the principal author of counter-propaganda in the preceding decade, and he now undertook to enforce conformity to the Anglican system of worship and doctrine. This once more aroused the political genius of the Puritan-Presbyterian group. Field again took over the task of corresponding and organizing secretary. His purpose now was to organize resistance to Canterbury's subscription test for religious uniformity, which all pastors were urged to refuse to sign. A great stream of petitions began to pour in upon Canterbury and Elizabeth's Puritan-minded Council; lawyers attacked Whitgift's proceedings, and the common law courts were not loath to use every quibble to hamper the operation of his ecclesiastical court. In addition to all this, a modified English version of the Geneva prayer book was prepared and printed.

In 1584, and during a meeting of Parliament in 1585, several convocations of Puritan-Presbyterian members met. They established a lobby in London, and during Parliamentary sessions met nightly with their Parliamentary members. William the Silent had recently been assassinated in the Netherlands and hatred of the Roman Catholics was at a new high. The Queen's safety was feared for and the Puritan members of Elizabeth's Council were particularly solicitous. This concern led the Council to persuade the Archbishop to accept a compromise which would forestall the displacement of many Puritan divines in their parishes. The Puritans themselves quickened their own efforts.

In 1585 these efforts took on the aspect of a political campaign to elect a friendly Parliament. Puritan leaders prepared propaganda statistics to show how many parishes were vacant or occupied by the unlearned and the unfit. They began working on a legislative program for the new Parliament, and they were also thinking along the lines of what would in another time become the party platform. A
general conference, not unlike an early or embryonic party convention, was held at Cambridge in July.

When the new Parliament assembled in 1586, the results of these efforts were apparent. There was a larger and more defined Puritan group, which sat together in the House, caucussed and dined together, and acted in unison. Again they had the aid of a Popish plot, for it was during this Parliament that Mary Queen of Scots was executed. With the Scottish problem apparently solved, Peter Wentworth and his associates sought to secure legislation authorizing a Presbyterian reorganization. This the Queen forbade. Wentworth raised in ten pertinent questions the matter of the privileges of the House of Commons. For this he was sent to the Tower, ostensibly for organizing a Puritan lobby in synod form.

The Puritans again failed to accomplish anything in the way of law, but their leaders did complete the Book of Discipline which was finally approved at a synod held at St. John's College, Cambridge, in September, 1589, during the Stourbridge Fair. This "Disciplina Ecclesiae," the Puritan Discipline, was in effect a statement of principles for political as well as ecclesiastical action. It outlined a theocratic system of pastors and elders ruling according to the laws of God. Despite the almost unlimited power given to the pastors and officers elected by the congregation, it was stipulated that "in all the greater affairs of the church, as in excommunicating of any and in choosing and deposing of church members, nothing may be concluded without the knowledge and consent of the church [congregation]." In this statement lies one of the germs of American Democracy.

While those who sought to reorganize the Church and to curb the power of the Queen and bishops had accomplished little that can be found in the statutes of the realm, they had gained an influential place in government and society. They had protected themselves from any very active government prosecution. The Queen's punitive measures were reserved almost exclusively for secessionists like the Brownists, Separatists, and the more radical sectarians who defied the Church and left it. Such persons were placed under the ban and were liable for banishment or execution. Under this threat some fled

3 A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline (n. p., 1574), 177, quoted in M. M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism (Chicago, 1939), 286.
to Holland at various times and in their congregational meetings at Amsterdam and Leiden developed ideas of political independence and self-government that were to be potent in America.

The Puritan-Presbyterian group ceased to be very active politically in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign. But some of them who had been engaged in the more political aspects of the movement, organization, propaganda and lobbying did not forget their craft and were ready to act again in the days of the Stuarts. They had likewise circulated ideas about limiting central authority and enlarging popular government. They had become familiar with and had spread a concept of society of equal men who were mutually responsible, which they urged as an improvement upon the older concept of a stratified society with fixed status. They had stirred among the people a new interest in Parliament and had given to some of its members a sense of representing the people. Furthermore, it should be remembered that ministers who had been deprived of their parishes by Elizabeth and her bishops in some instances became tutors and teachers, and thus communicated to a new generation ideas of individual worth and public responsibility which had their influence upon the next generation from whom were to come the founders and directors of the New England across the sea.

VI

The controversies of the sixteenth century which made their contributions to the evolving political behavior of the English people were not altogether religious in their origin and vocabulary. There were others which also contributed to the growing body of political argument stirring men to organize pressure upon government. These sprang more directly from prevailing social and economic discontents.

Population increases were beginning to strain social stability. The rise had been gradual but steady for more than a century, and now the increase made labor cheap and land dear. Landlords were under pressure in an age of rising prices to increase rents and were tempted by the growing cloth-making industry to devote much of their land to sheep-grazing rather than to crops. Then, too, rising prices in agricultural produce led many to see the opportunities in commercial
farming. The enterprising sought to establish large farms producing market crops, thus doing away with ancient customs of subsistence farming on small holdings.

Normal economic activity was further disturbed by the policies of Henry VIII and his government. His seizure of church lands caused a considerable redistribution of property. Much of it was sold, and in the course of the transactions more money came into active circulation. Henry then debased the currency, and the price level, already climbing because of increased silver mining in Germany, was raised still further. Such fluctuations in prices and values stimulated speculation and business activity.

These social and economic changes were accompanied by rural unrest. Many farmers were dispossessed, more were affected by increased rents; prices rose faster than the wages paid to farm labor. Despite the fact that many farmers prospered from the rising prices of their produce, many a rural area was the scene of unhappiness and bitter discontent. Turbulent East Anglia was to be the scene of violence. There the dispossessed and the impoverished were vocal. There, also, many were upset by religious controversy and by the disarrangement of old customs caused by the suppression of the religious guilds.

In the midst of this clamor there appeared a leader, Robert Kett, who in 1549 rallied a host of some 16,000 men on Mousehold Heath outside of Norwich. His headquarters were established in the ruins of St. Leonard's Priory. In protest against the herding of large flocks on the common pasture by the great landlords, Kett's followers slaughtered 20,000 sheep. Enclosure hedges were torn down, some local landlords were plundered, and a few of the gentry were brought into camp. At the foot of a great tree, thereafter known as the Reforma-
tion Oak, Kett dispensed rude justice, meting out penalties against the land monopolists.

The revolt was short-lived; King Edward's guardian sent troops to put it down. In essence it had not been so different from the uprisings of Wat Tyler and Jack Cade in previous centuries. Fortunately, its violence was not to become too general a tradition in Democracy. Its significance at this time lies in the fact that it called attention to abuses suffered by the poor, and in the name of divine and social justice called loudly for reform. This thread of social consciousness in
government has been very prominent in the design of American Democracy, and the fact that it was being emphasized in the sixteenth century on the eve of the American migration makes it appropriate to note the contrary types of political doctrine unravelling from it.

Those speaking in behalf of the displaced and hard-pressed were formulating a doctrine of greater equality, more social justice, and even wealth-sharing to be secured by petition under threat of resort to arms. This ideology created a counterphilosophy akin to the later laissez-faire ideas based upon acceptance of the will of God. Its proponents maintained that there were sufficient opportunities for the thrifty—"many meane men's children cometh honestly up." Doctrines of equality, it was charged, appealed only to the idle and envious, who, by seeking a new order in which it was not possible for all to be rich, would inaugurate a system under which every man would be poor. Rather should the less fortunate pray to God and protest to the King, remembering that poverty was ordained of God, a trial to make man patient. Thus was set a pattern of thinking which was to form the basis of many a later political controversy.

VII

English political expression in the sixteenth century was not confined to religious and socio-economic discussion, nor was English political inventiveness limited to such instruments of political action as were in use during these controversies. English energy and enterprise were carrying Englishmen to distant parts of the world, where they were assuming such responsibilities as would give impetus to the creation of a talent which was to contribute much to the development of Democracy. This talent was the capacity to adapt or to create political mechanisms and administrative devices, particularly as part of the process of organizing new societies in places far distant from England.

In the 1570's and 1580's England was first confronted with the problem of sending Englishmen to America to set up some sort of permanent establishment. Such a problem required decisions of management and government which started the weaving of other patterns of American politics.
When English enterprisers began to think of a political structure for America, they found certain experiences available upon which they could draw. Experiments in the establishment of English practice in self-government outside the realm had been going on for three hundred years, starting in the thirteenth century when certain English merchants broke away from the domination of the foreign traders who were then supplying England and sought to direct an independent line of export. These merchants were interested in selling wool, tin, and hides to the Low Countries across the Channel. Known as the Merchants of the Staple, they secured a concession through Edward I from the authorities of Antwerp to establish a staple or warehouse and offices, and a group of English traders thus set up in business for themselves in Antwerp. They had the right of self-government under the supervision of the London Merchants of the Staple; they elected a mayor and governed themselves within their compound in Antwerp politically as well as commercially.

Early in the fifteenth century, after the Staple had moved to Calais, Henry IV granted a charter to the Merchant Adventurers who were to operate in the north European countries. Under this charter the Adventurers elected their own governors and made laws for themselves. A half-century later, Edward IV gave a charter to the merchants operating in the Low Countries, defining their procedure for electing a governor and a court of twelve justiciars, as well as setting forth their legislative powers. This charter also provided that their laws must be approved by the Crown.

In Elizabeth's reign such precedents were useful. Far-seeing merchants noted the advantages Spain was reaping from her interests in the New World and from her control of southern and eastern trade routes. Goaded by England's lack of capital, her merchants were moved to seek sources of gold and eastern commodities by operating to the northeast, and some even thought of the northwest as a route to the Orient.

So it was that in 1553 a group of London merchants formed "The Mysterie and Companie of the Marchants Adventurers for the discoverie of regions, dominions, islands and places unknown." An expedition was sent to Russia or Muscovy to establish contact with the East. The venture was so promising that under the leadership of Sebastian Cabot, son of the famous American discoverer, the first
English joint-stock company to operate the Russian franchise was formed. On February 6, 1555, the charter forming the Muscovy Company passed the seals, giving the Company a monopoly of all franchises and prescribing a form of organization of great significance in the history of American Democracy.

The fellowship, i.e., the stockholders, in the corporation were required to meet periodically to choose a “court” to operate their company. This court was to be presided over by Cabot as governor during his lifetime and after his death was to be headed by two governors. With them were to be associated twenty-eight other persons elected annually, four consuls, and twenty-four assistants. A quorum of the court was to consist of the governor, two consuls, and twelve assistants, or if the governor was away, three consuls and twelve assistants. The court or the Company was empowered to make orders for the governing of trade.

The Muscovy Company, although granted the franchise to venture to America by the northwest, did not take advantage of this portion of its liberties, but some of the stockholders who frequented Muscovy House caught the spirit of a new adventure. One of these, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, had had the idea of exploration and the establishment of American outposts as early as 1566, just at a time when French Protestants were trying to establish a settlement in Florida and the mariners Hawkins and Stukely were bringing back reports of Spanish and French activities in America. Gilbert’s interest was for a time deflected by a governmental assignment to help extend English control in Ireland by military force and colonization. It was in Ireland that he met the sea dog Martin Frobisher, who was anxious to explore American waters for a northwest passage.

When Gilbert returned to England in the 1570’s he tried to interest his Muscovy associates and other private interests in Frobisher’s scheme of exploration and in his own plans of colonization. Finding his Muscovy friends were not at all interested in giving him support for an enterprise independent of their monopoly, he next sought to interest the government. Sir Henry Sidney, the Earl of Warwick, and Lord Burghley were enlisted to bring pressure upon the Muscovy Company on his behalf, and at length the Privy Council urged the Muscovy directors to co-operate. This was of no avail, however, until Michael Lock, the chief capitalist of the Company, was con-
verted. With the blessing of the Muscovy Company, Gilbert set out to sell shares to finance his plan, but only the final heavy investment by Lock himself made the venture possible. Frobisher made three voyages and found enough ore in Greenland to cause the Queen to charter the Cathay Company and to contribute £1,000 toward what she hoped would be a mining town and a trade station on a new northwest route to the Far East.

While this enterprise was developing under Frobisher, Gilbert planned a colony more to the south, and in 1578 received from the government a charter "for inhabiting and planting our people in America." He was given authority to exercise jurisdiction over a region within two hundred leagues of wherever he fixed his capital. Gilbert labored on his colony for five years and made two voyages on its behalf. During the second voyage he landed on Newfoundland and actually began a settlement, but it all came to nought since he was lost at sea returning to England in 1583. His half-brother Sir Walter Raleigh, however, carried on and was given a patent in 1584 to settle much farther south in a region called Virginia. He sent settlers to what is now North Carolina, and on the island of Roanoke sought to establish government by incorporating his settlers in the fashion of an English municipality, as "The Governor and Assistants of the City of Raleigh in Virginia." His governor was to have twelve assistants and was to rule as an English municipal council.

Raleigh's ventures also failed, but several steps had been taken toward laying the foundation of American colonization. The Crown had been unable to undertake empire building directly or at its own expense; the donation of a few hundred pounds was all that government would give. But the Crown did encourage private enterprise to establish outposts. It granted charters or patents to individual enterprisers, decreeing that they could create societies in the form of trading posts designed to be governed as English municipalities, and that they should have land at their disposal with which to encourage settlement and possible speculation. The government withheld for itself a share of all treasure discovered. But it was the individual enterpriser who was to assume the burden of the great venture and to be creative in adapting or inventing such political institutions as would be necessary for management and governance.
Thus in the sixteenth century Englishmen were becoming familiar with the operation of many of the basic ideas which were to shape American Democracy. The worth of the individual, freedom of expression, government with some reference to popular will, respect for social justice, and the partnership between government and men willing to adventure much for the commonweal—all these concepts flourished in the minds of many enterprisers when they began to think of a new society in America.

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