

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES:

AN ECONOMIC STUDY

by

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Introduction

When Henry VIII ascended the throne in 1509 there were close to 850 monastic foundations of various size, description, and wealth in England. These included over 500 monasteries, 136 nunneries, and 200 friaries, in addition of course to several thousand chantries and various minor religious establishments. During the 1520's some twenty-nine of the smaller monasteries were dissolved by Cardinal Wolsey for his special purposes; and between 1535 and 1540 Henry VIII and his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, dissolved all the remaining ones. In later years, between 1544 and 1553 primarily, the chantries, hospitals, and various minor religious establishments were dissolved, and an attack on the lands of the archbishops and bishops, which continued into the reign of Queen Elizabeth, began. In effect, much of the wealth of the church was stripped away within forty years, and a massive transfer of land, the greatest since the Norman Conquest, occurred. This transfer of land led in turn to far reaching social and economic changes which are still the subject of scholarly debate. Voltaire in the eighteenth century claimed that the prosperity of England commenced with the plunder of the church. Truly the sixteenth century holds an impressive claim as the period in which the modern economic history of England began.

The English Reformation and the dispersal of the wealth of the church can be studied in a number of different ways. Together they signify the ultimate success of the Tudors' attempts to subordinate to the crown the last of the great privileged powers in the realm. The church, prior to the Reformation, was the greatest political power in England except for the crown itself and was virtually independent of royal power. The ecclesiastical hierarchy had its own head, princes, territories, courts, legislative bodies, and laws. During the late Middle Ages there was an ecclesiastical majority in the House of Lords. The upper house was dominated by the seventeen English and Welsh bishops along with thirty mitred abbots and priors.¹ With the dissolution of the monasteries the political power of the church was greatly reduced. The abbots and priors were removed from the upper chamber, which gave the temporal peers a clear voting majority. Official positions in government, both national and local, were transferred to the control of laymen. When the Reformation and the dissolution are viewed in such a context they can be seen as a revolution in government which eliminated Roman jurisdiction and ecclesiastical power from England.

The church was also a great landowner. Over the

¹David H. Pill, The English Reformation: 1529-1558 (London: The University of London Press, 1973), 75.

centuries the monastic foundations had acquired vast landholdings from pious lay benefactors. It is estimated that, at the time of the dissolution, the church controlled as much as one-sixth of the entire realm and one-third of the total arable land. Through its spiritual and temporal sources the church's net yearly income was approximately £ 400,000, of which the monasteries enjoyed some fifty percent.² However, with the dissolution many of the church's lands, including most of the monastic estates, were placed on the open market and sold. Hence the Reformation and the dissolution can also be viewed as a revolution in landownership.

The economic history of the dissolution is the chief interest for the author of this work. For it not only encompasses a study of the political and landed interest of the church in England, but also extends into areas seemingly far afield of the Reformation and the dissolution. A good understanding of the underlying economic factors of the period is essential to a full understanding of the suppression of the monasteries. A brief examination of the financial position of Henry VIII, just prior to the attack on the church, presents overwhelming evidence of a king facing an increasingly difficult situation. He was confronted by the

²W. G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, King Henry's England: 1500-1547 (New York: Longman, 1976), 125-138. Hereafter cited as Hoskins, The Age of Plunder.

fact that, during the first twenty years of his reign, the strong financial position established by his father, Henry VII, was consumed by costly military expeditions against both France and Scotland. Additionally in 1534 a great rebellion broke out in Ireland and the threat of war and possible invasion by France and the Holy Roman Empire became a distinct possibility by 1538. It was clearly apparent to Henry and his ministers that the forced loans, subsidies, and benevolences which were used to finance the earlier wars against France and Scotland would be insufficient to meet all the necessary expenditures should England once again become involved in a major conflict. Other methods would be necessary to meet the heavy financial needs of a nation gearing for war. The wealth of the church could be confiscated for this much needed income. One could easily pursue a study of the economic problems which confronted the crown on the eve of the Reformation and the dissolution, and which were greatly relieved by the dissolution. Yet any study of the Reformation and the dissolution which limits itself to constitutional, agrarian, or economic factors will frustrate a complete understanding of why the Reformation and the dissolution were so successful. An examination of the attitudes of the English people and their relationship with the church is necessary for a complete understanding of the revolt against the church in England.

A common mistake in tracing the origins of the Reformation in England is to view its beginnings with the marriage problems of Henry VIII and Queen Catherine of Aragon. Henry's quest for a divorce is all too often depicted as the sole factor which propelled England into schism with Rome. It was not. The "King's Great Matter", although at the heart of the break from Rome, also gave the English people the opportunity to vent their cries of dissent and criticism against the church.

Over the years the ties which bound Englishmen to Rome had weakened. The vexations of the English people against the church were evident throughout England long before Anne Boleyn won the heart of Henry VIII, or before Henry VIII thought of achieving supremacy over the church in England. It was the English people and their grievances against the church in social, economic, political, and above all spiritual matters which prompted them to support Henry VIII in his break with the papacy. Their grievances deserve careful attention.

An examination of why the Reformation and the dissolution took place, and how the power and influence of the church was so easily removed from the social fabric, is the goal of the first chapter of this work. This chapter will demonstrate the extent of the deterioration in the nature of the church for the period between 1500 and 1536. This brief

examination will reveal that the existing conditions in the entire ecclesiastical system prior to the Reformation justified a radical reform of the church in England.

Once the ties with Rome were broken, the preparations for a sweeping reform of the church began. Thomas Cromwell, as Vicegerent in Spirituals from 1535, directed the Reformation. His reforms altered the church from an independent power within the state to a weak and dependent department of state. The consequences of this alteration, from the church in England to the Church of England, were far reaching. Not only was the authority of the central government greatly strengthened, but the financial base of the government was also reinforced by the dissolution of the monasteries.

It is important to realize that although the confiscation of the smaller monasteries was initiated in 1536, followed by the suppression of the larger monasteries in 1539, only a small percentage of the monastic estates were alienated by the crown prior to 1544. It was not the intention of Cromwell to release the floodgates of economic change by dispersing monastic wealth. Rather it was his intention to provide the crown with a vast landed endowment which would make the crown financially stable, a goal which Cromwell had labored so hard to achieve. However, the growing fear of invasion between 1538 and 1540 forced Henry VIII to begin the process of selling land, which ultimately

destroyed the financial stability which Cromwell had come so close to establishing.

Between 1538 and 1540 Henry VIII began a series of extremely costly defensive measures which involved the building of a number of fortresses along the southern coast of England, extending from Kent to Cornwall. All funds for this project came from the revenues of former monastic estates. In 1542 Henry VIII was once again at war with Scotland, and in 1544 a conflict with France began. It was during this period that the alienation of ex-monastic lands began in earnest and two-thirds of all former monastic properties were sold. Quickly the profits of the first wave of the dissolution were dissipated and the plan for the creation of thirteen additional bishoprics, on the basis of the largest monastic foundations, was left only half completed.³ Critics of the dissolution point to the crown's weakened financial independence and the incompleting plans for the reorganization of the episcopal system as direct consequences of the wholesale disposal of the former monastic properties. However, they often fail to see how the nation profited from that disposal.

The bulk of the monastic properties passed from the crown to the peerage and the gentry. The importance of this

³John R. H. Moorman, A History of the Church in England (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1973), 176.

fact lies not in the fact itself, but in its ramifications. The degree of successful exploitation of these newly acquired lands by lay society is fascinating. The transfer of the monastic estates to the more enterprising members of society, chiefly the gentry, stimulated the rapid growth of industry and technology. Every essential requirement for the growth of industry came from the land. Coal, lead, tin, iron, and building stone were mined from the land. Wood and grain grew on its surface. When these underexploited lands were placed on the open market their agricultural and mineral wealth were aggressively sought after. These exploitations by lay entrepreneurs became the stimulus for the growth of existing industries and the chief inspiration for many new ones.⁴

The period between the dissolution of the monasteries and the English Civil War can be depicted as the first significant departure from the traditional agrarian economy to a more dynamic dualistic economy in England. The chief characteristic of an agrarian economy is the overwhelming domination of agricultural pursuits. Other economic activities may be present in an agrarian economy, but they play a secondary role in both a quantitative and qualitative sense. England prior to the Reformation and the dissolution

⁴W. C. Richardson, "Some Financial Expendients of Henry VIII", The Economic History Review 7 (- 1956): 48.

subsisted largely on an agrarian economy. It was not until the last sixty years of the sixteenth century that England obtained its first paper and gunpowder mills, its first cannon foundries, its first sugar refineries, and its first important saltpeter works from abroad. In fact England had long been industrially backward when compared to most continental countries during the same period.⁵

The dualistic economy, which England entered into following the dissolution, is characterized by the existence of a large and important agricultural sector along with an active and dynamic industrial sector. In addition both sectors were in the process of undergoing continuous technological change as they interacted during the growth process. However, the principal characteristic of the dualistic economy was the gradual transition of the economic center of gravity away from the agricultural sector and towards the industrial sector.⁶

The rise of a dualistic economy is evident in the economic changes which occurred almost immediately after the dissolution of the monasteries. During the eighty years

⁵Irma Adelman, et. al., eds., The Theory and Design of Economic Development (London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 4. Hereafter cited as Adelman, The Theory. J. U. Nef, "The Progress of Technology and the Growth of Large Scale Industry in Great Britain, 1540-1560", The Economic History Review 5 (- 1934): 24.

⁶Adelman, The Theory, 4.

which followed the death of Henry VIII, a sustained industrial expansion began in England. By the outbreak of the Civil War, England was the leading nation of Europe in mining and heavy manufacturing. This statement is supported by the fact that by the middle of the sixteenth century an enormous expansion in the production of coal, glass, iron, salt, and ships had commenced. In addition a great increase in the production of other industrial products, such as alum, coal, metal goods, and other items, had begun. The fact that expansion in the manufacture of these goods came so quickly on the heels of the dissolution of the monasteries is more than a coincidence. It is evident that English society was adapting itself to a new economic spirit -- a spirit of inventiveness, enterprise, and determination which characterized England between 1540 and 1640.⁷

As in the case of industry, England also exhibited clear signs of expansion in agriculture following the dissolution. Rising population, inflated food prices, and the expansion in industry necessitated a revolution in traditional agricultural methods. Prior to the dissolution the agricultural techniques of both monastic and lay landlords were virtually indistinguishable one from the other. Increased production was limited solely to bringing additional land

⁷J. U. Nef, Industry and Government in France and England: 1540-1640 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 1. Hereafter cited as Nef, Industry and Government.

under cultivation. There is no evidence that the monasteries had realized the nature of an expanding market for their goods or sought new agricultural methods. This should come as no great surprise for there was little room for enterprise on any level within the restricted atmosphere of monastic estate management. However, the new owners of former monastic estates had stronger personal motives to make money and enrich themselves and their families than did the monks, and the agrarian sector began to expand.

Soon after the dissolution the new landlords began to introduce new farming methods, crops, and breeds of livestock. Such innovative practices increased the production of grain, vegetables, meat, and dairy products. These expanded levels of production were then used to feed the growing urban centers of England. The agricultural revolution of the sixteenth century, the expansion of industry and commerce, and the steady growth of England's cities and towns were all by-products of the dissolution of the monasteries. It is the goal of the last three chapters of this work to demonstrate the importance of the dissolution to the formation of the conditions which were necessary for the growth of a modern industrial state.

CHAPTER I
THE ROAD TO DISSOLUTION

The dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII was one of the most important events in English religious and social history. Occurring during a brief space of four years (1536-1540), the dissolution swept from England a corrupt and decadent institution which had been in existence for nearly a thousand years. During the early sixteenth century the monasteries were unpopular with the English people for a variety of reasons. First, in an age already seething with economic unrest, which resulted from a series of fundamental alterations in the traditional means of agriculture, industry, trade, and commerce, the monks were an easy target for those hungry for more land. For land was still the chief source of wealth and income, and many looked upon the monastic properties in their neighborhoods with covetous eyes. Secondly, by the sixteenth century the Benedictine ideal of monasticism was long since dead in England. The monasteries' spiritual reason for existing was being forsaken for worldly activities of estate management, political careers, and the constant pursuit of money. Thirdly, for many Englishmen the monasteries with their wealth, luxuries, and vices came to symbolize the waste and corruption which was widespread in the church.

Collectively the nearly eight hundred English monasteries were very wealthy and influential. During the height of the Middle Ages, the monasteries enjoyed a period of great prosperity. Pious laymen enriched them with gifts and endowments in return for prayers and masses of intercession for the sake of their own souls and in hope of an early release from purgatory. Without gifts of land it is unlikely that the monasteries would ever have accumulated sufficient estates and wealth to support more than a very small religious population, and their influence on English society would never have been as great as it ultimately became. To understand fully what was actually occurring throughout England and Wales, with regard to the acquisition of land by the monks, a brief examination of a few monasteries must be made.

In 633 A.D. a small monastic settlement called Beodricsword was established in Suffolk. Almost three centuries later, in 903, the relics of St. Edmund were entombed there, and the establishment became known as Bury St. Edmunds. Twice in the tenth century the abbey was endowed with land, and its religious population increased from seven to nineteen. By 1207 the abbey housed eighty monks, twenty-one chaplains, and 111 servants. At its surrender in 1539 the monastery had an income of more than £ 1,656 a year, used to support forty-four monks.¹

¹David Knowles, et. al., Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales (London: Longman, 1971), 61. Hereafter cited as Knowles, Medieval Religious Houses.

Sometime between 1129 and 1137 Quarr Abbey was founded. As an act of piety, Baldwin de Reviers, Earl of Exeter, granted the monastery extensive holdings on the Isle of Wight. In the foundation charter he gave the monastery the manor of Arreton and the land of Seta along with two mills, and "the lands and meadows pertaining to these two mills and the labour of men on these manors for maintaining and repairing the said mills".² Quarr Abbey was further endowed by the founder's son, William de Vernon. He granted the abbey two small islands and 200 acres of land. This grant alone was considerable acreage to be granted by a single individual and again the reason for the gift was to benefit the souls of King Henry II and William's father. In 1188 Richard de Reviers granted the monastery an additional manor for the sake of his brother's soul. By 1291 the temporal revenues of Quarr Abbey were over £ 109 annually.³

Bury St. Edmunds and Quarr Abbey are but two examples of the general process that swept across England and Wales prior to the thirteenth century. Hundreds of other examples could be cited. Tavistock Abbey, for example, owned over 22,000 acres; Meaux acquired over 20,000 acres; Croyland Abbey came to own estates in five counties; and Lewes Priory

²S. F. Hockey, Quarr Abbey and its Lands: 1132-1631 (Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1970), 6, 67.

³Ibid.

acquired land in 233 different parishes. In addition to the land itself, the monasteries often held lordships of entire towns as well as monopolies over all milling, timber cutting, fishing, and hunting. Blyth Abbey, for example, collected tolls on goods sold in or passing through the town of Blyth.⁴

The revenues of the monastic foundations were usually very large in proportion to their number of monks and nuns. The wealth of the monastic communities was obtained from four different sources: (1) temporalities, or income from land; (2) spiritualities, or income from appropriated parish churches; (3) trade and industry; and (4) gifts and endowments.

By far the largest share of the monks' income came from their estates, which, as already noted, were quite extensive. During the period between the outbreak of the Black Death of the 1350's and the dissolution, the monastic institutions pursued a land management policy based on a system of long-term leases with entry fines and fixed rents. Not only did the monasteries own a significant proportion of the land, but they also possessed the best as well as a majority of the sites suitable for arable farming and animal husbandry. Thus, their temporal incomes remained high until the dissolution.⁵

⁴Lionel Butler, et. al., Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain (London: Michael Joseph, 1979), 77, 83. Hereafter cited as Butler, Medieval Monasteries.

⁵Pill, The English Reformation: 1529-1558, 75-76.

The second most important source of monastic income came from the revenues of appropriated parish churches. The monks came to be one of the chief appropriators during the Middle Ages in one of three ways. First, early in the history of English monasticism, the monks either established or supported the parish church in their area which entitled them to the rights of advowson and collecting tithe. Next, during the height of monasticism, the monks were given the right of patronage by pious lay benefactors as a form of endowment. The final way the monks acquired rights of patronage was by a bishop granting them various parish churches. This was usually done when the survival of the monastic community was threatened.

Appropriated parishes brought additional revenues to the monasteries in two ways. Tithe alone contributed approximately five-sixths of all spiritual income enjoyed by the monks and was either used directly by the house as food or was sold on the local market. In addition the right to nominate the vicar of the parish church was theirs. Before the thirteenth century monks rarely served as vicars themselves. They did, however, make every effort to save money by filling the position with poorly paid priests.⁶

⁶Paul Vinogradoff, ed., Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History, Vol. I, Alexander Savine, "English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution", (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 240, 265. Hereafter cited as Savine, English Monasteries.

The third source of income was the receipts of trade and industry. Trade in agricultural products by the monasteries had a long and productive history during the Middle Ages. Ramsey Abbey, for example, sold its excess grain at Ipswich, and Glastonbury Abbey sold its cheeses in Southampton, while Winchester sent its grain as far afield as Flanders. The Cistercians made large additions to their income by the extensive breeding of sheep. In 1280 Meaux Abbey possessed 11,000 sheep, while Kirkstall Abbey owned 4,000 in 1300. Other Cistercians earned income from the sale of wool. Vaudey Abbey, for example, earned over £ 200 a year from its wool sales.⁷

Other monasteries found extra income in the mineral wealth of their estates. The Cistercian Abbeys of Rievaulx and Louth Park operated extensive iron mines and produced manufactured iron products. The Cathedral Priory of Durham owned vast coal fields, which it leased to the local population. Other monastic communities made extra money from salt works, basket making, and the right to wreckage from the sea.⁸

Adding these sources of income together with many other minor forms of income enables one to see that the monastic institutions were extremely rich. At the time of the great

⁷John R. H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge: The University Press, 1946), 297. Hereafter cited as Moorman, Church Life.

⁸Ibid., 295-296.

survey of 1535 it became apparent that the monasteries enjoyed about half the total wealth of the church in England. It was this great wealth, however, which undermined monastic ideals in England.⁹

The life-style of the monastic communities changed as the revenues from their landed estates increased. The basic monastic ideal, stressing a life of austerity and rejection of the world, began to deteriorate. In its place arose a life-style increasingly worldly and often more comfortable than that enjoyed by a majority of lay society. The medieval abbot lived the life of a territorial magnate. Increasingly the abbots absented themselves from the monastic community and traveled from manor to manor supervising their estates and employees. Living the life of a country gentleman, many abbots lived well beyond their means. One of the abbots of Westminster, Walter de Wenlok, spent lavish sums on the employment of forty-three men in his household, including musicians and actors. Abbot Wenlok was not alone in his fondness for servants; it was a passion which plagued the upper clergy. The abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, employed sixty-five men in his personal household, while the prior of Norwich employed "nine squires, six clerks, and about thirty-five other men". It is estimated that, just before the dissolution, the monks employed close to 25,000 laymen

⁹Pill, The English Reformation: 1529-1558, 75.

to run their vast estates. The abbey of Hayles, in Gloucestershire, for example, had a religious population of twenty-two. The monks there employed seventy-seven lay servants. Tewkesbury Abbey was the home of thirty-nine monks who employed 144 laymen on their estates. Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire was home for twenty-two monks and was served domestically and professionally by 122 laymen. Truly the life-style of the rich monastic foundations was both comfortable and worldly. In most cases the monasteries maintained more servants than was necessary to continue the monastic ideal and the qualities of a cloistered life.¹⁰

In addition to the great expense of so many servants the heads of monastic communities often added the extra expense of lavish entertainment, costly building projects, purchases of vast amounts of gold and silver plate, plus taxes and loans imposed on the monasteries by the government. The wealth of the monasteries transformed their basic ideology as a spiritual institution into one poised precariously between its spiritual and secular roles.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., 275; Savin, English Monasteries, 223; Slavin, The Precarious Balance, 136.

¹¹Ibid., 276. One of the abbots of Bealieu was said to have dined frequently in the company of three counts and forty knights. At the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds the abbot and his guests consumed "six carcasses of beef, fifteen-and-one half pigs, thirty-one geese, and 155 fowls", all in one week!

For the heads of the monastic establishments, the requirements of government service, estate management, and other worldly activities forced them to neglect their spiritual duties and allowed their subordinates to lapse into secularism, laziness, and corruption. Without the strong influence of the abbots and priors, the quality of the monastic communities declined. The monks abandoned their spiritual obligations and ventured beyond the monasteries' walls in pursuit of worldly pleasures, subjecting the monastic system to ridicule and disgrace.

By the close of the Middle Ages, the growing indignation of the laity towards the conduct of the monks was apparent. John Wyclif and the Lollards, in the fourteenth century, stated that the religious orders were not in a state of grace. He charged them with corruption and wasting their endowments which he thought could be put to better use. In the sixteenth century the attacks on the monks were renewed with added force and purpose,

In a speech before the House of Commons, Alderman Pury stated, "They come indeed once a year to receive the rents and profits of the said lands, but they do not relieve the poor, keep hospitality, or repair highways and bridges". Alderman Pury was correct in his observations. The church itself supplies supporting evidence for Alderman Pury's statement. Just before the dissolution several visitations

of monastic communities were conducted throughout England, and these visitations give a vivid picture of what life in a monastery had become.¹²

Critics of the dissolution have stated that the attack on the monasteries was a movement of the rich against the poor in England. The apologists for the monks and the monastic system depict the monasteries as the last refuge for the poor, the hungry, and the aged. They also view the monasteries as the chief supporter of education and hospitality in England. They were seriously mistaken. Between 1517 and 1536 the visitations of the bishops and survey of Thomas Cromwell clearly demonstrate that the monasteries were no more providing proper services for the nation in charity, education, and hospitality than they were performing their religious duties.

Between 1517 and 1531 two visitations were conducted in the diocese of Lincoln. The first was carried out under the supervision of Bishop William Atwater between the years 1517 and 1520. The second was conducted by Bishop John Longland between 1525 and 1531. The material gathered in these visitations sheds an enormous amount of light on the conditions existing in the monasteries of Lincoln. When the finding

¹²Christopher Hill, The Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), 11.

of Bishop Atwater and Longland are examined, in conjunction with the findings of their fellow bishops, a more complete picture of the monasteries on the eve of the dissolution can be seen.

In 1519 Bishop Atwater visited the Benedictine monastery of Bardney in Lincolnshire. There he found that the monastery housed twenty-six monks and enjoyed an income of over £ 366 a year. Bishop Atwater found the house in a very poor state. There were hounds all about the church, rectory, and chapter house. He also cited the monastery for allowing women to enter the confines of the cloister unopposed. These two facts were notorious among the monasteries of the sixteenth century and earlier. They serve to point out the degree of worldliness which had entered monastic life. Hunting, which is evident by the presence of the hounds, and moral decay, which is evident by the presence of women, were ancient vices of monasticism and had over time become ingrained in English monasticism.¹³

Bishop Atwater then visited the abbey of Croyland. There he discovered that the abbot had taken into his possession the offices of celler and receiver. Often when these offices were in the hands of the abbot the monks complained bitterly that they suffered from lack of proper food and drink. The monks would also complain that the abbot sold or gave away

¹³ Knowles, The Tudor Age, 75.

the provisions of the monastery to his family and friends. Whether this was the case at Croyland is undetectable from Atwater's visitation and there are no other surviving records of further visitations of Croyland Abbey.¹⁴

Upon arrival at Eynsham Abbey in Oxford, Bishop Atwater found sixteen monks living off an income of £ 421 annually. During his examination of the monks he discovered severe problems within the establishment. He noted the presence of two women "of doubtful reputation", meat being eaten in the rectory, and the lack of a qualified grammar master to instruct the monks and novices in their education. The lack of qualified grammar masters was another problem which plagued the monastic communities. Utilizing their income of £ 421 yearly, the monks of Eynsham should have been able to engage a qualified educator, but they did not. Rather they continued in their worldly pursuits and allowed the educational gap between themselves and the laity to widen.¹⁵

The next leg of Bishop Atwater's visitation took him to the small establishment of Humberston Abbey. The three inmates residing there lived off a yearly income of only £ 32 annually. Bishop Atwater's records show that the monks were accused of leaving the confines of the monastery in

¹⁴Baskerville, English Monks, 82.

¹⁵Knowles, The Tudor Age, 64.

order to play tennis. Playing tennis does not seem to be an outrageous crime, but the intention of the monastic ideal was being corrupted. Absenting oneself from the religious services of the monastery for the pursuit of tennis was as wrong as chasing women, drinking, or gambling. Each represents a clear lack of religious fervor among the monks and the increasing worldliness of monastic life.¹⁶

At the abbey of Peterborough, Bishop Atwater recorded few complaints against the monks. His records do show that the abbot was involved in two expensive building projects. As the abbey enjoyed an income of over £ 1,679 each year, these projects did not place a severe strain on its revenues. However, the money could have been better spent to feed the poor, educate the nation's children, or aid society in a number of more practical functions.¹⁷

In 1528 Bishop John Longland visited Leicester Abbey. This single establishment epitomized the corrupt state of the entire monastic system. Abbot Clown enjoyed the life of a country squire. He hunted often and rarely attended the religious services of the abbey. When he did attend its ceremonies he always brought his fool for entertainment. This completely destroyed the religious nature of the services and caused the monks and novices to burst into

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 65.

laughter. It was also discovered that the celler was using the monastery's food not for the monk's meals and relief of the poor but on lavish banquets for himself and his friends.¹⁸

The monasteries in the diocese of Lincoln were neither better nor worse than those in other parts of England. The visitation of Lincoln gives a detailed picture of most monastic foundations in one important diocese. Both the very rich and the very poor establishments were visited, and similar findings were evident in each. The heads of the monasteries failed to enforce the Rule of their order; many of the abbots and priors forgot their vows of poverty and lived the life of rich country squires; the education of the monks and novices was neglected; and the religious duties of the monasteries were not being performed. For those who found the traditional dress of their order unfashionable or the requirement of celibacy unappealing, both were easy to abandon for courtly dress and mistresses. The surviving records of the episcopal visitations just before the dissolution provide shocking evidence for the findings cited above. Collectively they paint a picture of corruption, moral decay, and an almost complete failure of the religious orders to perform their principal religious duties.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., 67,

¹⁹Pill, The English Reformation: 1529-1558, 77.

In 1535 Thomas Cromwell ordered a great survey of the monastic foundations which is now known as the Valor Ecclesiasticus. This document clearly demonstrates that the monasteries were not providing proper services for the nation in the areas of charity, hospitality, and education. These three traditional functions of the monasteries were the principal secular duties of the religious orders. Only their function as institutions of prayer and intercession were more important. As described above, most of the monastic communities were not observing their religious duties and the Valor gives evidence that their other responsibilities were also being neglected.

Perhaps the most important secular function of the monasteries was that of providing alms for the poor. The amount of alms granted to those in need, and the form in which they were distributed, was often stated in the foundation charters of the monasteries. The alms of the founder, or compulsory alms, were usually given to the poor and sick on certain holidays and commemoration days. These alms typically consisted of food and clothing.²⁰

Alms were distributed liberally on the commemoration day of the founder and other important benefactors. At St. Augustine's, Canterbury, thirty poor persons were fed and clothed in remembrance of the founder's soul. Another

²⁰Savine, English Monasteries, 240, 265.

important event was on the funeral day of a monk. On that occasion as many as 100 poor persons might be fed, and the tradition of maintaining one poor person with food and clothing for a year after a monk's death became widespread. Equally important were the anniversaries of abbots when again a large number of poor persons were given food and clothing. However, as important as monastic charity was for many of England's poor, it must be remembered that the alms of the monks was not an organized system of poor relief. In fact the value of the monks' contribution in relieving the plight of the poor is questionable.²¹

Alexander Savine's work on the Valor presents a detailed list of more than 200 monasteries and the amount of alms each contributed through compulsory forms of charity as established by founders and benefactors. This list includes 210 monastic foundations with a combined income of over £ 90,000 annually. When he subtracted the amount of tax-exempt alms given by these religious communities, the grand total was a pitiful £ 2,700 or about three percent of the total monastic income. Perhaps one can understand the anger and frustration of Alderman Pury when he denounced

²¹Dom David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Time of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council: 940-1216 (Cambridge University Press, 1963), 484. Hereafter cited as Knowles, The Monastic Order, Baskervill, English Monks, 31.

the monasteries for not relieving the suffering of the poor.²²

The Valor also demonstrates that more than 100 monasteries did not contribute any compulsory alms. The income of these institutions was greater than £ 50 each per year. When the two economic groups are combined, one discovers that the monasteries actually contributed only 2.5 percent of their total income to relieve the plight of the poor. Savine did not even consider the religious houses that earned less than £ 50 a year, which he considered unable to assist in poor relief.²³

Hospitality was an additional obligation of the monks. Both secular and regular clergy were required to render hospitality to pilgrims and wayfarers. It was an obligation which required both a considerable amount of the monks' time and a large portion of the monasteries' income. The Rule of the various orders made special provision for the management and direction of monastic hospitality. Most orders provided that travelers, whenever they stayed overnight at a monastery, were to dine with the abbot and apart from the rest of the monks. Travelers were also to be provided with separate sleeping quarters. The purpose of these two provisions was to keep outside influences from infecting life

²²Savine, English Monasteries, 238.

²³Ibid.

within the monastic walls. However, as time passed most of the monasteries were actively pursuing a policy of catering to the needs of wealthier travelers.²⁴

The monasteries did not fear losing wealthier travelers to commercial inns, because the monastic foundations were known for better food and accommodations and were in every way far superior to the inns of the time. The wealth of the monasteries allowed them to have the best food and beer as well as feather beds in their guest chambers. Providing such fine lodgings was important to the monks. For in their secret hearts they hoped that a rich guest served well and appreciative of his stay would subsequently become a rich benefactor of the monastery, as many in fact did. Most monasteries capable of doing so provided their guests with a surprisingly high standard of comfort. Barnwell Priory, for example, provided its guests with "clean cloths and towels, silver spoons, mattresses, blankets, sheets, pillows, and quilts pleasing to the eye. . .".²⁵ However, serving as inns for the very rich was not a real function of monastic hospitality.

The only form of hospitality which the Valor considered was that which took care of poor persons and corrodians

²⁴Baskerville, English Monks, 28.

²⁵Moorman, Church Life, 353.

living within the confines of the monastery. At the time of the Valor the number of those receiving aid in this manner was small. Often the corrodians did not even live in the monasteries but received a fixed money payment and no other service. However, even if the total number of poor men and women as well as corrodians was included in the amount of hospitality that the monasteries provided, the difference would hardly have been noticeable.²⁶

In the field of education the monks were traditionally regarded as the principal educators of the nation's children. In the past monastic schools served the educational needs of the monks and the sons of rich laity, but as time wore on even this function was neglected. Only in the universities did the monks serve a major role in education during the Tudor period. Grammar schools in the monasteries were neglected, and the educational level of the monks declined.

As institutions of charity, hospitality, and education the monastic foundations on the eve of the dissolution did not live up to the standards of the monastic ideal. Compared with the wealth of the monastic communities as a whole, the charitable benefits which the people derived from the monks were meager. The corrupted and worldly state of the monasteries in England did little to alleviate the spiritual or physical suffering of the people. The monasteries

²⁶Savine, English Monasteries, 245.

succeeded only in monopolizing power and wealth, which ultimately destroyed the spirit of the monks and left only shallow men.

From this brief examination of the monastic houses in England, one can not help but feel disdain for the deplorable conditions existing in the monastic system. Over the centuries the traditional duties and responsibilities of the monks had slipped into disuse and gradually disappeared altogether. In their place arose a new tradition of vice and corruption, which grew more insidious with the passing of time. As A. G. Dickens has stated, "no major section of the early Tudor Church stood more grievously in need of reform and fresh inspiration than did the regular clergy",²⁷

Reform and suppression of the monasteries was not an entirely new idea. Throughout the history of monasticism in England, countless examples exist of various monasteries being dissolved to serve the specific needs of England's kings and other powerful men of either church or state. In the thirteenth century Edward I confiscated the wealth of the French monastic cells--known as the alien priories--in order to finance his expeditions against France between 1294 and 1299. His son Edward II dissolved twenty-two houses belonging to the Templars but later transferred most of their

²⁷Dickens, The English Reformation, 53-54.

property to the Knights Hospitallers. Again Edward II, following the example of Edward I, confiscated the wealth of the alien priories and held them his personal captives for more than two decades. Richard II and Henry IV also used the wealth of the alien priories in time of war to offset the cost of military preparations. In 1414 Henry V dissolved the alien priories, because of the great amount of money they were sending out of the country. Thus, a tradition of confiscating the wealth of the monasteries in time of grave crises was established in England long before the reign of Henry VIII.²⁸

Monasteries were also dissolved, and their properties put to better use in the building of colleges and hospitals, long before the dissolution period. In 1484 the Augustinian priory of Selborne was dissolved along with Sele Priory by Bishop Waynflete, their lands subsequently being annexed to Magdalen College, Oxford. In the early sixteenth century Bishop John Fisher dissolved the monastery of Bromehall in Salisbury and the nunnery of Lillechurch in Rochester in order to endow St. John's College, Cambridge. Each of these suppressions was sanctioned by the pope through special papal bulls. Even Henry VIII's father, Henry VII, used the

²⁸G. Constant, The Reformation in England, The English Schism and Henry VIII, 1509-1547 (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 142-143. Hereafter cited as Constant, The Schism.

wealth of monasteries to establish a chantry and hospital at Windsor. In 1494 he received a papal bull to suppress the monasteries of Mottisfont and Luffield for this purpose. However, the most important example of utilizing the wealth of various monasteries to support the personal project of any one person must be that of Cardinal Wolsey's suppression of twenty-nine monasteries during the 1520's to endow Cardinal College Oxford and a grammar school in Ipswich.²⁹

Between 1524 and 1528 Wolsey suppressed these religious foundations by making use of papal bulls and on three occasions by simply utilizing his own authority. His purpose was not so much to establish a great college but to found a perpetual memorial which would bear his name. In 1529 Ambassador Chapuys described the college at Oxford as a monument to its founder with "nearly every stone blazoned [with] the cardinal's arms",³⁰

It seems clear that Wolsey was determined to reform the monasteries in some way. In 1528 he requested that Henry VIII permit the suppression of all monasteries which were inhabited by less than twelve monks. He also wished to establish a number of new bishoprics by using the foundations of various monasteries. However, neither of these projects

²⁹Ibid., 144.

³⁰A. F. Pollard, Wolsey, Church and State in Sixteenth Century England (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 217. Hereafter cited as Pollard, Wolsey.

materialized because shortly thereafter Cardinal Wolsey fell from power.³¹

Although Wolsey did not achieve his planned reform of the secular and regular clergy, he did supply Thomas Cromwell with the training he would later use to bring about the destruction of monasticism in England. It was Cromwell who was Wolsey's chief agent during the suppression of the twenty-nine monasteries which formed the endowment of Cardinal College. It was Cromwell who oversaw the surveying of these monastic properties and the foundations' goods. It was Cromwell who organized the transferring of the land and adjusted the claims of the monk's tenants. Under Wolsey's tutelage, Thomas Cromwell mastered the skills required for monastic confiscation. These skills would be put to extensive use during the 1530's.³²

³¹Ibid., 183.

³²Dickens, Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation, 25.

CHAPTER II

THE DISSOLUTION AND THE SUCCESSORS TO THE MONKS

The incident which sparked the great 1535 survey of monastic wealth now known as the Valor Ecclesiasticus was the outbreak of a great rebellion in Ireland in 1534. It was this rebellion which also triggered the suppression of the smaller monasteries in 1536. In April 1534 the powerful tenth earl of Kildare had arrived in England after being summoned to appear before Henry VIII. The earl had been appointed Henry's chief deputy in Ireland just two years before, but during that two-year interval he had made many powerful enemies who now sought to discredit him and destroy his influence with the king. Knowing the intentions of his enemies the earl of Kildare appointed his son, Thomas Fitzgerald, as his Vice-Deputy during his absence.¹

Upon arrival in England the earl of Kildare was taken seriously ill. Reports sent by Eustace Chapuys, ambassador of Charles V, stated that it was unlikely that the earl would recover. False rumors soon spread that Henry VIII had ordered the earl's death. These rumors must have reached Thomas Fitzgerald because when Henry VIII subsequently invited

¹Richard Bagwell, Ireland Under the Tudors, With a Succinct Account of the Earlier History, Vol. I (London: The Holland Press, 1963), 161. Hereafter cited as Bagwell, Ireland.

him to attend court in London Fitzgerald refused to come. At this point Henry VIII grew increasingly angry as well as suspicious and ordered the earl of Kildare placed in the Tower of London on the charge that he was "fortifying his castle with the king's artillery".²

Matters grew much worse when Fitzgerald, believing that his father had been murdered on orders by Henry VIII, rose in open revolt. With the aid of his kinsmen and armed retainers, Fitzgerald marched on Dublin where he renounced his allegiance to the king and called for open war against England. He then ravaged the countryside around Dublin in order to remove the means of support which he knew a royal army would require. It was also at this time that Fitzgerald ordered the murder of John Allen, archbishop of Dublin and an old enemy of his father's. However, at this point in the rebellion Fitzgerald declared that he took the pope's part in the ensuing battle between Rome and London.³

The rebellion of Silken Thomas was a serious blow to Henry and his foreign and domestic policies. Reports were soon widespread that the Empire and Spain were aiding the Irish. One report stated that Spain was sending 12,000 troops to assist the Irish. Henry attempted to settle the

²Ibid., 162.

³L&P Vol. 7, no. 530, 614, 681, 915, 957.

affair quickly by offering to release Silken Thomas's father, to pardon Silken Thomas for his rebellion against the crown, and to pardon him for his part in the murder of the archbishop of Dublin. Silken Thomas refused the offer.⁴

Secretly, however, Henry VIII was raising forces for an invasion of Ireland. Earlier, in January 1534, Henry had ordered the acquisition and storage of 30,000 bows upon learning of the earl of Kildare's visit to Scotland. It seems that Henry was rightly concerned about the loyalties of his Irish subjects.⁵

Meanwhile the earl of Kildare had died of his illness in the Tower of London. Thomas Fitzgerald, now the eleventh earl, was busy gathering support from his uncles and other powerful Irishmen while boasting that they were in the pope's camp and would aid him against Henry VIII.⁶

Chapuys was soon reporting to Charles V that the earl of Desmond and five of Silken Thomas's uncles had joined the rebellion. Henry VIII in turn ordered his troops in Ireland to destroy all castles which were giving shelter to the rebels. By March 1535 it was reported to Cromwell that the power of Silken Thomas was diminishing daily. However,

⁴L&P Vol. 7, no. 957.

⁵Ibid., no. 32.

⁶Ibid., no. 83.

the rebellion still raged and its leaders were reported to be spending much of their time at monasteries taking "meat and drink at their pleasure".⁷

The cost of putting down the rebellion was mounting daily. Sir John Allen, Master of the Rolls, wrote to Cromwell from Ireland and stated that the rebels could not be destroyed if the king's army remained in Dublin. He hoped that the Commons would vote £ 100,000 to finance the effort to suppress the rebellion. A grant of this magnitude would have necessitated a new tax levy. In May 1535 Henry VIII received a total of £ 38,000 42s. 3d. in parliamentary taxation from England and Ireland. In that same year he was forced to pay out £ 38,148 8s. 2d. to his troops, £ 466 13s. 4d. for ordnance and repair of his garrisons, and £ 133 6s. 8d. to the widow of the tenth earl of Kildare. The combined total of these expenditures reached £ 39,948 8s. 2d. Once again Henry VIII's spending exceeded his revenues.⁸

In February 1535 Viceroy William Skeffington finally led the royal army out of Dublin and marched on the main Geraldine castle at Maynooth. There Skeffington laid siege to the principal Geraldine forces. Maynooth was taken and

⁷Ibid., no. 681, 915.

⁸L&P Vol. 8, no. 264.

Kildare's allies gradually went over to the king's side until Kildare was left alone.⁹

In August 1535 Kildare chose to surrender to Leonard, Lord Gray. Two months later the earl was committed to the Tower of London, where sixteen months later he and five of his uncles would be executed on a bill of attainder. Even after the execution of Silken Thomas the Irish rebellion continued to smolder and consume additional revenues from Henry VIII's treasury. As W. G. Hoskins had stated, Ireland remained a "running sore" requiring constant attention until late in 1537.¹⁰

In March 1536, only seven months after the capture of Silken Thomas, the act for the dissolution of the smaller monasteries was passed. It was more than a coincidence that the dissolution of these monasteries would follow the capture of the Geraldine rebellion's leader. The rebellion had imposed a severe strain on the financial position of the crown. Both Henry VIII and his chief minister, Cromwell, sought measures to relieve that strain.

During the rebellion most of the final legislative acts which completed the break with Rome were passed. In 1534

⁹Bagwell, Ireland, 173.

¹⁰W. G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, King Henry's England 1500-1547 (New York: Longman, 1967), 211. Hereafter cited as Hoskins, The Age of Plunder.

the Act of Absolute Restraint of Annates was passed which terminated the payment of annates and all other religious fees to Rome. Although these annates and fees were still to be collected, they would now go to fill the coffers of the king rather than those of the pope. Next came the Act Forbidding Papal Dispensation and Payment of Peter's Pence, which placed extensive power over the church in the hands of the king. The Act of Supremacy gave legal sanction to the title of Supreme Head of the Church, which Convocation had recognized in 1531.¹¹

The most important piece of legislation for the future of monasticism in England was the act which annexed first fruits and tenths to the crown. For it was this act which in turn required a reassessment of the church's wealth. In 1535 Thomas Cromwell, as Vicegerent in Spirituals, was directed to investigate conditions throughout the entire ecclesiastical system. This visitation process began in July 1535, just one month prior to the capture of Thomas Fitzgerald. In accordance with the act of Parliament, 25 Hen. VIII, c. 21, the agents of the visitation were instructed to inquire into the conditions of the monasteries, both spiritual and temporal and to look into the lives and morals

¹¹Sybil Jack, "The Last Days of the Smaller Monasteries in England", The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 21 (April, 1970): 93-124.

of their inhabitants. Clearly Cromwell was searching for a case against the monks to present to Parliament which would aid in his planned attack on the wealth of the church.¹²

The letters between Cromwell and his chief investigators demonstrate that there was no effort directed toward reforming the monasteries. The purpose of the visitation was to record the wealth of the religious orders and to gather evidence of immorality and superstition. It was the instances of moral and spiritual decay which Cromwell found interesting and around which he built his case against the monasteries. However, it was the economic significance of the Valor which pleased both Cromwell and Henry VIII.¹³

The Valor's reevaluation of the church's wealth was astonishing. Prior to 1535 the church was taxed according to the Taxatio of 1292, which assessed the tax on all religious establishments and beneficed clergy at £ 199 33s. a year. This relatively small sum was used to support the pope. The Valor, however, evaluated the taxable wealth of the church at £ 40,000 a year which would henceforth be used to support the crown.¹⁴

¹²L&P Vol. 3, pt.2, no. 2484.

¹³Pill, The English Reformation: 1520-1558, 64.

¹⁴Ibid.

To a king who was constantly on the verge of bankruptcy, and who had spent £ 38,000 on the Irish rebellion in 1534 and an additional £ 40,000 in 1535, the wealth of the church must have appeared a potential gold mine of extra revenue. The Valor estimated that the yearly income of the church was close to £ 320,180. This was a staggering revelation to a king whose income from his own estates rarely amounted to more than £ 40,000 a year.¹⁵

As the king's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell was eager to find a way to strengthen the financial position of the crown. He hoped to relieve his royal master of the need to tax and to demand loans from his subjects in order to run the government. With the new awareness of the wealth of the monasteries, Cromwell's attentions were increasingly drawn to them as the answer to the crown's financial problems. Correctly gauging that public opinion was essentially anti-clerical, he moved quickly against the monasteries and the secular clergy.

The dissolution of over 374 smaller monasteries, or those with incomes of not more than £ 200 a year, brought the crown an additional income of £ 32,000 annually plus the profits realized from the sale of monastic plate, jewels and other movable goods. This move against the church greatly

¹⁵J. J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1969), 361.

improved the crown's financial position and enabled Henry VIII once again to direct his attentions toward continental affairs. However, while Cromwell may have measured correctly the degree of anticlericalism in England he failed to take into account the extent to which the people, particularly the northerners, relied on the traditional economic order of things which included the monasteries.¹⁶

In northern England the economic realities of 1535 were harsh. Between 1525 and 1535 the northern counties of Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, Westmorland, Cumberland, Lancashire, and Cheshire had suffered from acute agricultural depression, rising prices, heavy taxes, and periods of starvation. Alone these economic pressures made the region ripe for rebellion.¹⁷

Many Englishmen in the north viewed the dissolution of the smaller monasteries as a means of further taxation by the crown. For the majority of the people, their first knowledge of the king's move against the monasteries was when they heard rumors of the impending visitation or saw the king's agents roaming about the countryside. This was followed by monks leaving their monasteries, the termination of monastic charity in those areas, and serious questions concerning the tenureship of monastic property. It was only

¹⁶Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 131.

¹⁷Knowles, The Tudor Age, 320-321.

natural that additional rumors would spread that Henry VIII was planning not only to plunder the wealth of the church but also to rob his subjects by increasing taxes, devaluing the coinage, and causing other economic hardships.¹⁸

The active suppression of the smaller monasteries began in May 1536, and by August riots were being reported in Cumberland, while in Yorkshire the people of Hull confiscated the church plate and jewels in an attempt to prevent the king from obtaining them. Others denounced the actions of the king and his chief minister and stated that their agricultural misfortunes resulted from "God's vengeance" for the suppression of the monasteries.¹⁹

The Pilgrimage of Grace, which was the single most dangerous rebellion against Henry VIII's government, began shortly after the dissolution of the smaller monasteries. It has traditionally been viewed principally as a rising of Catholic supporters against the religious policies of Henry VIII. But the motives for the rising were not that simple. The revolt grew out of a number of different factors including religious, constitutional, and economic grievances. The suppression of the monasteries was only one of many elements

¹⁸Madeleine H. Dodds and Ruth Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace: 1536-1537 and the Exeter Conspiracy: 1538, Vol. I (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1971), 76. Hereafter cited as Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace.

¹⁹Ibid., 78-80.

which brought about the revolt. Every social class of the period was becoming increasingly disturbed over the policies of the central government. The heavy taxation imposed in recent years was resented by all. The gentry resented the statute of uses, which deprived all but the eldest son of any income from the family estates. The peasantry was fearful of the results of the crown's attack on the church, while the clergy were bitter over the tactics used to rob them of their wealth.²⁰

The rising in the north began in Lincolnshire on October 1, 1536, and quickly spread into Yorkshire. Lincolnshire was dotted with many monastic communities, and the effects of the suppression were particularly striking in that region. When asked why they had rebelled against the king, the men of Lincolnshire stated that the people "were willing to take the king as Supreme Head of the Church . . . but he must take no more money of the commons during his life and suppress no more abbeys . . .". Their earliest demands did not center on the religious changes taking place during this period. Rather the target of their grievances was the economic policy of Thomas Cromwell, which many viewed as dangerous.²¹

²⁰Knowles, The Tudor Age, 321.

²¹Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace, 98.

On October 8, 1536 the men of Lincolnshire issued seven articles to be taken to Henry VIII. In this document they demanded no more taxes except in time of war and the repeal of the statute of uses. They asked that the ancient liberties of the church should be restored and that tenths and first fruits should not be taken from the clergy. Again they renounced the suppression of the monasteries and requested that Cromwell, Rich, Legh, and Layton be surrendered to the people or expelled from England. Their final request was for a general pardon for those who had joined in the rising.²²

The demands of the men of Lincolnshire demonstrate several key components of the rebellion. First the major concern of the people was not religion but rather economics. They were fearful that the wealth of the north, both secular and religious, was being removed to the south. Secondly, they express the traditional notion that their problems were not the fault of the king, but rather the blame lay with his evil advisors. Finally, they believed that the king would redress their grievances and pardon them of their extreme actions against the crown.

By the time the Lincolnshire petition was issued, Henry VIII had ordered the duke of Norfolk and Richard Cromwell

²²Ibid., 114.

to march against the rebels. By October 10 the majority of the king's forces were in Yorkshire, and within eight more days the Lincolnshire phase of the rebellion was over. This was owing chiefly to the size of the king's army and to the mounting division among the Lincolnshire rebels. However, by that time the revolt had spread into Yorkshire, and there the revolt reached its most dangerous proportions.²³

The Yorkshire phase of the rebellion began on October 8, 1536, and was led by Robert Aske of Aughton, Yorkshire. The rebels of Yorkshire were more numerous, more determined, and the social classes more united than those in Lincolnshire. Aske succeeded in capturing the cities of York and Hull and the castle of Pontefract which was the principal royal stronghold in the north. Upon the surrender of Pontefract its commander, Thomas, Lord Darcy, became one of the rebellion's leaders. The importance of Darcy's joining the rising is that it rekindled the bitterness between the Tudor's and the surviving nobles of the White Rose.²⁴

The king's army under the command of the duke of Norfolk and the earl of Shrewsbury were marching on Pontefract while the Pilgrims headed south. On October 25 the two armies met at Doncaster and there agreed to a truce. On October 29,

²³Ibid., 141.

²⁴A. G. Dickens, Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation (London: The English University Press, 1966), 96.

1536, terms acceptable to both sides were reached and the armies departed.²⁵

The truce of Doncaster was an uneasy one during which the full extent of Henry VIII's troubles became apparent. By late October news of the rebellion had spread throughout Europe. Ambassador Chapuys reported to the emperor that the rising had already cost Henry close to £ 200,000, but more serious than monetary considerations was the effect the rebellion had on Henry VIII's foreign policy.²⁶

In 1536 the diplomatic situation in continental Europe was extreme delicate. France and the Empire had remained hostile to one another since the 1525 defeat and capture of Francis I at Pavia. Once Francis I renounced the Treaty of Madrid he had loosely allied himself with Henry VIII. However, this alliance began to give way once Henry rejected papal supremacy and Francis I announced the marriage of his daughter, Madeleine de Valois, to James V of Scotland.²⁷

Pope Paul III was delighted with the news of the marriage. Secure in the support of James V, he hoped that the marriage would lead Francis I to move against Henry VIII. But Francis felt he could take no action against England at

²⁵Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace, 266-270.

²⁶Ibid., 331.

²⁷Ibid., 334.

this time. Francis wanted a clearer picture of the situation in England as well as a papal excommunication of Henry VIII before he would consider military action against England. He realized that if he broke with Henry there was a chance that England and the Empire would become allies against him. The pope could not get the Emperor to move against Henry either, because Charles V did not want to do anything which would strengthen the existing alliance between Francis I and Henry VIII. Clearly the nature of the diplomatic situation allowed Henry VIII to direct the majority of his attention to suppressing the rebellion.²⁸

The truce allowed the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace to make a formal list of their grievances. In November 1536 a council was held at Pontefract and four major categories of grievances were set forth. These categories consisted of religious, constitutional, legal, and economic concerns of the northern counties. The majority of the articles presented are directed at two major issues. First, the grievances are concerned with many of the changes which were taking place as England was emerging from the feudal system and entering the early modern period. Secondly, the people were outraged over the rapidly changing economic order of things which included the suppression of the

²⁸Ibid., 333-334.

monasteries, increased taxation, enclosure, rising rents, and the removal of wealth from the north.²⁹

On December 6, 1536 the grievances of the rebels were delivered to the duke of Norfolk to be presented to Henry VIII. In return the duke promised a royal visit and a new Parliament to be held in the north. The seeming success of the rebel's cause was quickly swept away when renewed violence was reported in Beverley, Yorkshire.³⁰

It was the rising in Beverley, led by John Hallam and Sir Francis Bigod, which gave Henry the motive he needed to brutally suppress the Pilgrimage of Grace. The failure of the northern rising brought an end to any major internal opposition to the policies of the crown. Henry VIII was then free to carry out the destruction of monasticism in England and to direct his attentions to the threatening moves taking place on the continent.³¹

The role of the monks in the rebellion is difficult to assess completely. In both Lincolnshire and Yorkshire the religious communities took a minor part in the rising and an even smaller role in the rebellion's leadership. However, it is correct to say that the majority of the monks were

²⁹Ibid., 346, 373.

³⁰Ibid., Vol. II, 52.

³¹Ibid., Vol. II, 56.

sympathetic, either actively or passively, toward the rebels.³²

Those monastic communities which took part in the rising paid dearly for their lack of discretion. Henry VIII instructed the duke of Norfolk to go to the monasteries of Sawley, Hexham, Newminster, Lanercost, Saint Agatha, and any other which had resisted his will and to deal with them "without pity or circumstance . . . to the terrible example of others". The abbot of Sawley, Thomas Bolton, was attainted for treason and executed as was the abbot of Whalley, John Paslew, and the abbots of Kirkstead, Barlings, Bolton, and the ex-abbots of Fountains and Cockerell. All in all, nine abbots and priors were attainted for treason during the period 1537-1539.³³

The abbey of Whalley was one of the great monasteries which had survived the first act of dissolution. But when the abbot was attainted for treason, its valuable estates escheated to Henry VIII, as the properties of any other traitor would have done. Other great abbeys soon fell into Henry's hands by a new process whereby the abbots were severely pressed into surrendering their monasteries to the king. In this manner the earl of Sussex obtained the surrender

³² Knowles, The Tudor Age, 326-327.

³³ Geoffrey Baskerville, English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), 166. Hereafter cited as Baskerville, English Monks.

of Furness. This practice of surrender through threats, promises, and intimidation became the policy of Cromwell between 1537 and 1539. On November 11, 1537 the great monastery of Lewes was surrendered to Henry. Shortly thereafter the great abbey of Titchfield was transferred to the crown.³⁴

By the end of 1537, Cromwell had begun a massive assault on the remaining monasteries. First, he called for a new visitation of the great abbeys. This was followed by the destruction of the shrines of England's saints including Saint Edmund, Saint Thomas, and several others. Then Cromwell suppressed the friars. These three acts were designed to bring about the voluntary surrender of the remaining abbeys. Many of the abbots or priors of the great abbeys did surrender in hope of obtaining either an office or a pension from the crown. Thus, by 1539 many of the remaining monasteries had surrendered completely to Henry VIII, occasionally on the promise of being converted into an educational establishment or to be used as the basis for one of Henry VIII's new bishoprics.³⁵

While a number of great abbeys were surrendering themselves to the crown, the diplomatic situation on the

³⁴Knowles, The Tudor Age, 350.

³⁵Ibid., 351; Baskerville, English Monks, 170.

continent was growing more threatening for the king. Henry VIII had hoped that he could prevent a Franco-Imperial alliance when, after the death of his third wife, Jane Seymour, he began the search for a fourth. He made overtures to both the French and Imperial courts for not only a match between himself and a foreign princess but also for one between his daughter Mary and either a French or an Imperial prince. Henry's attempts to delay the feared Franco-Imperial alliance were short lived.³⁶

In 1538 Charles V and Francis I met at Nice and signed a ten-year truce with the pope's blessing. Six months later Paul III issued a bull deposing Henry VIII. Tensions increased further when in 1538 James V took Mary of Guise as his second wife. Scotland was at that junction allied firmly with France and the papacy. On January 12, 1539, Charles V and Francis I met again at Toledo to sign an agreement which stated that neither party would enter into an agreement with England without the approval of the other. It seemed as if Henry's greatest fears were being realized, since a ring of powers bent on his destruction seemed to be forming.³⁷

The year 1539 was one of grave crisis for England. Unlike the crisis of the Geraldine rebellion of 1534, England

³⁶Dickens, Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation, 159.

³⁷J. J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, 356.

was now faced by the possibility of a triple alliance between France, Scotland, and the Holy Roman Empire. This alliance also held in store the possibility of a three-pronged invasion from the north, south, east, and with the added uncertainty of Ireland in the west. The realization of this diplomatic nightmare forced Henry to undertake a series of costly defense measures. It was at this time that the great new fortifications along the southern coast were begun and thousands of troops gathered for the defense of England in the event of a possible invasion by France.

The great cost of war preparations would necessitate heavy taxes, loans, and benevolences. The remaining monasteries were also suspected of being havens of Catholic dissent. Utilizing an act passed by Parliament in May 1539, all the monasteries still in existence were quickly dissolved. This act supplied Henry with the urgently needed money to finance his necessary war preparations.³⁸

The dissolution of the greater monasteries increased the crown's revenues by a further £ 136,000 a year. It also brought an estimated £ 1 to 1.5 million from the sale of plate, jewels, bells, lead, and all other movable goods. It would seem that this enormous sum might have solved the king's financial problems once and for all. Yet by 1542 Henry VIII had blundered into an unnecessary war

³⁸Ibid., 361.

against Scotland, and by 1544 he was also at war with France. Nothing is more costly than financing military campaigns. The expense of the 1544 French expedition alone came to £ 650,000, while the cost of fortifying and supplying Henry's prize possession, Boulogne, came to £ 133,000 between September 1544 and October 1545. The total cost of the French campaign thus amounted to over £ 2 million.³⁹

The revenues obtained through the dissolution of the greater monasteries were not enough to meet the expense of England at war. Thus, between the signing of the Treaty of Nice in 1538 and the beginning of the French campaign, Henry was forced to begin the wholesale dispersal of the former monastic properties. From the sale of over two-thirds of these monastic estates, Henry realized more than £ 2 million, but as stated above this sum just barely covered the cost of the French campaign.⁴⁰

It would be unreasonable to assume, however, that all the wealth gained through the sale of former monastic lands was wasted on foreign war. Henry VIII was determined to use part of the monastic wealth to provide new bishoprics, schools, and hospitals. He himself designed a program for the endowment of thirteen new episcopal sees so that every

³⁹Ibid., 364-365.

⁴⁰Ibid., 453.

county or two smaller adjacent counties could have their own bishop. Each new see was to be endowed with the wealth of the largest monastic foundations, but owing to the strains of war the plan was never fully realized. Rather only six additional bishoprics were established and these were poorly endowed. The new bishopric of Westminster received an income of only £ 600 a year. The others, which included Peterborough, Gloucester, Bristol, Chester, and Oxford, were endowed with considerably less.⁴¹

In the area of education Henry VIII's record is an equally mixed one. In 1529 he destroyed the grammar school at Ipswich which had been established by Cardinal Wolsey the previous year. He also threatened the existence of Wolsey's Cardinal College at Oxford. During the dissolution period he allowed the majority of monastic schools to be dissolved along with the monasteries, and those which survived did so through the generosity and concern for education of private citizens and town corporations. However, to many Henry ranks as one of education's greatest and most generous royal patrons, largely because of his later contributions.⁴²

In 1540 Henry endowed five regius professorships at Cambridge and in 1546 five at Oxford. In 1546 he also founded

⁴¹Felicity Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes, A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 131.

⁴²Ibid., 16.

Trinity College, Cambridge, and endowed it with the revenues of twenty-six monasteries. At Oxford he completed Wolsey's plan for the establishment of Christ Church. He re-endowed the cathedral schools of England and established new ones at his six new bishoprics. However, local education benefited less from Henry's magnanimity than from that of the laity who gained materially from the dissolution.⁴³

The plans for reorganizing the system of poor relief under Henry VIII were equally limited. All the largest hospitals connected with the monasteries were swept away at the dissolution. Only toward the end of Henry's life did he restore the hospital of St. Bartholomew's and endow it with the small sum of 500 marks a year. It was not until the reign of his daughter, Queen Elizabeth I, that an adequate system of poor relief was established.⁴⁴

Critics of the dissolution state that Henry VIII wasted the enormous inheritance he received from the monks on his unnecessary foreign wars. From the information presented above this appears to be a valid statement. Yet critics of the dissolution often fail to see how the nation profited from the disposal of the former church lands. They point too

⁴³Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, 518.

⁴⁴Ibid., 516-517; A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 150; Joan Simon, "The Reformation and English Education", Past and Present 11 (April, 1957): 55.

quickly to the chance missed by Henry VIII to address the problems in religion, education, and charity. They overlook the fact that the dissolution not only lessened the degree of religious corruption in England, but also inaugurated a new economic era. Those who criticize Henry VIII and the dissolution must remember that the ecclesiastical institutions possessed a significant portion of the total land area in England. This fact is even more important when one realizes that the church authorities managed their estates far more conservatively than did their lay counterparts.

The monks had little reason to exploit their estates aggressively or to manage them with long term projections in mind. They alone of all the great landlords of England could not leave their estates to relatives. As monks, they were not struggling to establish themselves in society. Thus, to pursue an aggressive land management policy which was aimed at establishing oneself in society or elevating one's family were characteristics alien to the inhabitants of the monasteries. The best the monks could do was to grant favorable leases of monastic properties to their relatives and nothing more.

With the dissolution Henry VIII released the flood gates of economic and social change. He created a vacuum which made it possible for agricultural and industrial developers to alter the traditional forms of land management.

It now became possible for enterprising merchants to expand their businesses in towns where monastic properties had blocked such expansion. It now became far easier for merchants and lawyers to buy estates in the countryside and gradually be absorbed into the gentry. It now became likely that the former managers of monastic lands could purchase those lands. It was now far more certain that entrepreneurs of all ranks and stations would risk their fortunes in the pursuit of wealth.

The disposal of the monastic properties began immediately after the first act of dissolution. Between May 1536 and October 1537 forty grants of former monastic estates were made either in the form of gifts or in exchange for other lands. The majority of these earliest grants were to men who had served Henry VIII during the period of his divorce, the Geraldine rebellion, and the Pilgrimage of Grace which followed the act of 1536.

There were three principal groups which benefited from the dispersal of the monastic estates after 1536. The existing nobility who were in high favor with the king were the first to reap enormous reward from the dissolution. The present duke of Bedford owes his present position in society to Henry VIII's appreciation of the service rendered by John Russell, first earl of Bedford. Lord Russell served as president of the King's Council in the West in 1536

and 1537. Apparently realizing the value of his work, Henry VIII made him his personal representative in the west and granted him the enormous estates, consisting of over 22,000 acres, which had formerly belonged to Tavistock abbey. This grant with the modest reserved rent of £ 284 5s. a year in perpetuity made the earl of Bedford the greatest political force in the western parts of England.⁴⁵

The current earls of Rutland also owe their fortunes to Henry VIII and the dissolution. Thomas Manners, the first earl, supported Henry during the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536-1537. As one of the king's principal supporters, Thomas Manners too benefited from one of the earliest grants of ex-monastic properties. In exchange for certain properties in Middlesex and Chilham Castle in Kent, he obtained the valuable abbey of Rievaulx in Yorkshire and fourteen manors which had belonged to Croxton Abbey in Leicestershire. From this sweeping transaction the Manners family gained enormously. However, the availability of other monastic estates was too much for the ambitious earl to resist.⁴⁶ In 1536 earl Thomas purchased the estates of the dissolved priory of Warter, which included seven manors.

⁴⁵Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, 518.

⁴⁶Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 134; G. R. Elton, The Tudor Revolution in Government, Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII (Cambridge: The University Press, 1962), 338-339. Hereafter cited as Elton, The Tudor Revolution.

During the early 1540's he bought for £ 4,683 a block of fifteen manors which had belonged to Garendon Abbey in Leicestershire and a second block of twelve manors in Lincolnshire, which included the site of Belvoir Priory. These purchases and exchanges of monastic properties served to make the earls of Rutland a major social and political power in the north of England.⁴⁷

Like the Russells and the Manners, many other families already well established in society benefited from Henry VIII's largesse, including such members of the nobility as the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the earls of Southampton, Lincoln, and Shrewsbury, and the Lords Cumberland, Wharton, and Latimer. However, only fourteen percent of the monastic lands alienated by the crown before 1547 went to members of the peerage and a mere 2.5 percent of all lands alienated were in the form of free gifts.⁴⁸

The overwhelming majority of the monastic estates passed from the hands of the king and into the hands of a vast cross-section of England's population. Courtiers and royal officials, lawyers and merchants, and members of the country gentry were all successors to the monks. As R. H. Tawney

⁴⁷Lawrence Stone, Family and Fortune, Studies in Aristocratic Finances in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), 166.

⁴⁸Ibid., David Knowles, The Tudor Age, 395; Pill, The English Reformation: 1529-1558, 91.

once stated, the lasting effects of the dissolution were "not so much to endow the existing nobility as [it was to] lay the foundation for a new nobility to arise in the next century".⁴⁹

One must remember that most of the former monastic estates were sold by the Court of Augmentations at current market values. That is to say, when one requested an estate a survey of that property was made, its value determined, and it was then sold at twenty years' rental value for landed estates and ten to twelve years' rental value for urban properties. All properties purchased from the crown were subject to the feudal tenure of knight-service and wardship.⁵⁰

The Court of Augmentations, which administered the confiscated estates, was divided into fifteen administrative districts for England and two for Wales. Each district was staffed by several receivers, baliffs, stewards, officials of the court of wards, collectors of the clerical tenths, and other officials. All seventeen courts were controlled by the central court in London presided over by its chancellor, Sir Richard Rich. It was to these various courts that the people of England submitted their requests for monastic

⁴⁹R. H. Tawney, "The Rise of the Gentry: 1558-1640", The Economic History Review 11 (- 1941): 23-28.

⁵⁰H. J. Habakkuk, "The Market for Monastic Properties: 1539-1603", The Economic History Review 10 (- 1958): 364.

properties. Of course the rich and powerful attempted to circumvent the augmentors and make their requests directly to Cromwell. In 1538 Sir Brian Tuke petitioned the chief minister for the monastery of Hulton in Staffordshire, not for himself but for his son-in-law. Tuke's suit met with no success for that monastery was later granted to Sir Edward Aston. About the same time, Sir Thomas Audley wrote to Cromwell and requested the abbey of Walden, in Essex. The request was granted and during the seventeenth century his grandson, Thomas Howard, earl of Suffolk, built the great mansion known as Audley End on that site. In one case the townsmen of Carmarthen in South Wales petitioned Cromwell for the dissolved house of the Gray Friars, where they hoped to establish a grammar school, but their request was denied.⁵¹

The members of the various courts of augmentations did not hesitate to increase their own incomes with purchases of choice monastic properties. Sir Richard Rich of the central Court of Augmentations obtained forty-two monastic manors, thirty-one rectories, and twenty-eight vicarages. Thus, by utilizing his privileged position he was able to establish himself as the second largest landowner in Essex. Sir Thomas Pope, treasurer of the central Court of Augmentations,

⁵¹G. H. Cook, Letters to Cromwell and Others on the Suppression of the Monasteries (London: John Baker, 1965), 191-203.

obtained thirty monastic estates through purchases and exchanges. In so doing he made himself one of the richest commoners in England. Nearly every member of the Court of Augmentation secured enough landed wealth to establish his family firmly among England's landed gentry.⁵²

Detailed studies of transactions in the counties of Norfolk, Devonshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire demonstrate that the class which benefited most from the dissolution was the gentry. In Devonshire the majority of the monastic properties passed to well established local families. Less than ten percent of the monastic properties went to people from outside the county. In Norfolk the statistics are equally impressive. In 1545 the crown owned 126.5 manors, the nobility 188, the gentry 1,093.5, and all others together possessed thirty-three manors. By the death of Queen Mary in 1558, the crown possessions in Norfolk had declined to 73.5 and the nobility's to 174.5, but the gentry's had risen to 1,151 while the total of all others stood at twenty-eight manors. Of the 263 ex-monastic manors in Norfolk, two-thirds had passed to the gentry by the end of Mary's reign.⁵³

In the West Riding of Yorkshire there were but a few major landowning families. The nobility was represented by such families as the Cliffords, earls of Cumberland, the

⁵²Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 133.

⁵³Ibid., 137.

Talbots, earls of Shrewsbury, Thomas, Lord Wharton, and John Neville, Lord Latimer. The gentry was comprised of between two and three hundred landowning families of varying degrees of wealth. The majority of these would be more correctly characterized as yeomen with incomes of £ 10 and above per year. The two richest gentry families were those of Sir Henry Savile and Sir William Gascoigne, with lands worth £ 400 and £ 533 a year, respectively. The Malleverers of Wothersome, the Middletons of Middleton and Stockeld, and the Darcys of Aston each had lands that produced over £ 200 a year. These five were the richest landowning gentry families in the West Riding.⁵⁴ Following the 1536 act of dissolution, the West Riding came under the administrative jurisdiction of the Yorkshire Court of Augmentations, which was staffed largely with men not connected with any of the major powers in the area. This is evident by the request of John Neville of Chevet for lands formerly belonging to Hampole Priory in the West Riding, which was denied. Sir William Gascoigne was also blocked in his quest of the nunnery of Nun Morkton. However, when Oswald Sysson, who was not yet a landowner, petitioned for a part of Selby Abbey, he was granted his request. This was largely owing to Sysson's connections with

⁵⁴R. B. Smith, Land and Politics in the England of Henry VIII, the West Riding of Yorkshire: 1530-1546 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 87-88.

Sir Ralph Sadler and Leonard Beckwith, who held positions in the royal household and the Court of Augmentations, respectively.⁵⁵

Of the monastic sites and lands within the confines of the West Riding, five went to members of the king's household, two to officials of the Court of Augmentations, while eight were leased by well established Yorkshire gentry and noble families. Only six parcels of religious properties were sold before the end of 1539 including the lordship of Halifax, obtained by Thomas Cromwell; the site of Nun Monkton, purchased by Lord Latimer; Dax Priory, bought by Sir Marmaduke of Everingham; and Synningthwaite Priory, which Thomas Tempest bought for his nephew. The final grant of religious property in 1539 went to Sir Christopher Hales, Master of the Rolls.⁵⁶

In 1540 there were twelve additional sales of monastic properties, and between 1540 and 1546 there were six to eight additional sales each year. The total amount which the Court of Augmentations received from the West Riding came to £ 37,470 between 1536 and 1546. Sixty percent of this sum was paid by twenty-one grantees.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Ibid., 226-227.

⁵⁶Ibid., 227-228.

⁵⁷Dickens, The English Reformation, 159; Smith, Land and Politics in the England of Henry VIII, the West Riding of Yorkshire: 1530-1546, 241-242.

The nobility of the West Riding bought former religious land value at £ 472. The earl of Cumberland purchased properties valued at £ 175 a year which, in addition to a successful marriage, increased his income from £ 162 to £ 1,100 a year. The earl of Shrewsbury purchased lands worth £ 152 a year, while John Neville, Lord Latimer bought lands valued at £ 105 a year. Thomas Wharton made a smaller purchase of land worth £ 40 a year.⁵⁸ The two leading members of the gentry in the West Riding did not acquire any of the former monastic lands. Only Sir William Gascoigne requested lands, but neither he nor Sir Henry Saville are listed in the records of purchasers of monastic properties.⁵⁹

Among the members of the gentry with incomes in excess of £ 200, only Sir George Darcy bought lands through the Court of Augmentations. Sir Thomas Malleverer did make a land transaction in 1544, but he bought the manor of Allerton from the Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge. Only six West Riding families with yearly incomes of less than £ 200 purchased monastic lands with an average value of £ 13 a year. Three men of yeomen status made purchases of confiscated lands with an average value of £ 17 a year. One younger son of a West Riding family bought lands with a

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

yearly value of £ 9 and one lawyer from the West Riding purchased lands from the Court of Augmentations worth £ 7 a year. The largest purchase by a non-noble West Riding resident was made by Richard Pymond, who was a merchant.⁶⁰

Of those coming from outside the West Riding to buy monastic properties, only two were heads of established landowning families. Sir Gervaise Clifton of Nottinghamshire bought lands valued at £ 36 a year, whereas William Hungate of the East Riding purchased lands with a yearly value of £ 13. Seven purchases were made by younger sons of families outside the West Riding, and of these seven four were lawyers. Of the four lawyers, one was in royal service and two were officials of the Court of Augmentations. One other official of the Court of Augmentations purchased land in the West Riding. Sir Richard Gresham, a London financier and father of the famous Sir Thomas Gresham, made the largest purchase of former monastic properties, totaling £ 450 a year. Robert Fermour, a London merchant, bought lands valued at £ 25 a year.⁶¹

The reason behind the purchase of lands in the West Riding varied. The earls of Cumberland and Shrewsbury demonstrated their loyalty to the king during the Pilgrimage

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

of Grace and were allowed to purchase lands in which they had a special interest. The earl of Cumberland was eager to acquire the priory of Bolton, which had been founded by his family, and he was allowed to purchase it on favorable terms. Lord Latimer and Lord Wharton were equally important to Henry as stabilizing elements in the North, and their purchase of monastic properties were therefore approved.⁶²

The members of the Court of Augmentations who purchased lands in the West Riding were younger sons of established gentry families. They obtained their lands in order to become members of the gentry class. Their position in the Court of Augmentations naturally made the process easier.⁶³

The townsmen who bought land in the West Riding did so for a number of reasons. Sir Richard Gresham's enormous purchase of Fountains Abbey was intended as a profitable investment, as was the acquisition of Hambleton manor by Robert Hungate. However, the West Riding merchants, Richard Pymond and Hugh Wirrall, bought their properties with the intention of becoming gentlemen.⁶⁴

The remaining major purchasers of ex-monastic lands in the West Riding bought additional lands to increase their

⁶²Ibid., 245.

⁶³Ibid., 247-248.

⁶⁴Ibid., 247-248.

estates or purchased lands in order to establish themselves in the landowning class. Many of these were the younger sons of existing landed families such as John Tempest of the West Riding and Sir William Fairfax, who was the first member of his family to be a landed gentleman rather than a lawyer.⁶⁵

This brief analysis of the movement of ex-monastic lands in the period following the dissolution is important to an understanding of what was taking place throughout England. The complex land transactions which occurred in the West Riding were similar to those that took place in Devonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and most other counties of England. The conclusion which can be drawn from a study of the disposal of the ex-monastic properties is that the gentry had become the major landowning class in all of England by the latter part of Queen Elizabeth I's reign. In fact by the early 1600's the gentry had acquired some ninety percent of all former monastic manors secured by private citizens.⁶⁶ However, as important and interesting as tracing the way the gentry were the principal beneficiaries of the dissolution is an examination of how the successors to the monks managed their newly acquired lands.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Tawney, The Economic History Review, 28-30.

CHAPTER III
THE DISSOLUTION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLAND

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the English industrial sector experienced a significant transformation. Prior to the Reformation, England was essentially an industrial backwater when compared to most of her continental neighbors. Basically an agrarian nation, the English relied on other countries for their manufactured goods. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, England was characterized chiefly as an exporter of raw materials and an importer of finished wares. Only in the woollen industry and in the mining of lead and tin did the English rank as important exporters of finished products. However, between 1540 and 1640 England emerged as the leading producer of manufactured articles and one of the principal mining nations of Europe.

In England this economic transformation began just prior to the first attacks on the church and continued at an accelerated pace thereafter. The consequences of the dissolution of the monasteries hastened this economic reversal by terminating the church's near-monopoly over England's natural resources. The transference of the vast mineral wealth of the church to lay society was extremely

important for the growth and development of England's industrial sector. This was especially true for the expansion of such key industries as coal, iron, lead, and tin mining. However, the plunder of the church was only one incident in a series of events which served to stimulate industrial expansion in England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

One of the principal driving forces behind industrial development was "profit inflation". The effect of an expanding population and rising prices served to keep wages low and profits high. In addition to the attacks on the church and the economic imbalance between prices and wages, this period also witnessed an expansion in trade, the introduction of new technology from abroad, improved credit facilities in the capital, and a government increasingly interested in becoming self-sufficient. However, one must remember that the expansion which took place in the industrial sector was largely the result of individual efforts.¹

During the late sixteenth century, England's chief economic resource was clearly her people. Not only increasing in number, they were also deeply concerned about

¹P. C. Gordon Walker, "Capitalism and the Reformation", The Economic History Review 3 (November, 1937): 16; Y. S. Brenner, "The Inflation of Prices in England, 1551-1650", The Economic History Review 15 (- 1962): 268.

improvement and innovation of every kind and degree. In both industry and agriculture they were eager to learn from others and sufficiently enterprising to experiment with their own ideas. The change in the ownership of much of England's land opened many new opportunities for the aggressive exploitation of England's natural resources which had until this time remained neglected.

Before beginning an analysis of several key industrial pursuits, such as the coal, iron, lead, and other mining and related industries, it is essential that the significance of these industries be clearly understood. Records of industrial activity prior to the sixteenth century are rare. During the sixteenth century and after, evidence pertaining to developments in both industry and agriculture become more common. But the increase in the number of records concerning industrial activity should not lead to the conclusion that a mature industrial society emerged at this time. These same industrial records demonstrate that only a small proportion of England's population was directly involved, either as industrial laborers or as owner-operators, in what some have termed the "Industrial Revolution of the Sixteenth Century". Nevertheless, the significance of the expansion in industry, agriculture, and commerce is that fundamental changes began in the latter half

of the sixteenth century and on the heels of the dissolution.²

Throughout the period with which we are concerned, wool and the manufacturing of woollen goods was England's chief commercial and industrial activity. During the years between 1540 and 1640 the textile industry experienced many changes in methods of manufacturing and marketing. However, these developments were accomplished without any major technological change which characterized the other areas of England's industrial sector.³

Those industries which benefited from the introduction of new technology were chiefly mining, metal working, and several new industries introduced from abroad. Prior to the dissolution, advances in these industrial activities were hindered largely by the economic organization of the country. Although the guild system did not usually interfere with these industries, other blocks existed which served to retard their expansion and development. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the mining and metal working industries was the church's ownership of the vast majority of England's natural resources. Once the break from Rome was accomplished much

²Sybil M. Jack, Trade and Industry in Tudor and Stuart England (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1977), 26. Hereafter cited as Jack, Trade and Industry.

³A. E. Musson, The Growth of British Industry (London: B. T. Batsford, 1978), 43-45.

of what had restrained the expansion of the industrial sector was removed.

Records concerning the industrial enterprises of ecclesiastical landlords are rare. Alexander Savine, in his outstanding work on the Valor Ecclesiasticus, concludes that the monastic communities contributed little to the industrial strength of England. Instead of taking an aggressive interest in the exploitation of their known mineral resources, Savine maintains that the monks withdrew from an active role in industrial development and assumed a position of inactive rentiers. A similar statement can be made in regard to other clerical landlords.⁴

Surviving records of many monastic landlords demonstrate that a significant portion of their income was derived from mining. It was, however, uncommon for monks to exploit their mineral deposits directly. Rather most chose to lease their mineral rights to local residents. In return for leases of coal, iron, lead, tin, and other minerals the clergy received fixed rents, special dues, tithes, and other benefits. Abbeys rich in mineral wealth counted the revenues received from these leases as vital and important revenue sources, yet they took little interest in the expansion of these industries. The priors of Durham, for example, enjoyed

⁴Savine, English Monasteries, 124-125.

large profits from the leasing of their rich coal fields, yet the leases which they granted were drawn in such a way as to discourage growth within the industry. The wealthy abbeys of Battle and Robertsbridge owned lands traditionally important in the iron industry, yet their economic records are mute in regard to the ironworks which are known to have existed.⁵

In England, mining was traditionally and legally divided into three main groups. First, the crown claimed ownership of all precious metals, such as gold and silver. Secondly, the mineral rights of those elements of less value, such as coal and iron, went to those who owned the land. Thirdly, there were the "free-mining" regions of England which included the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, Aston Moor in Cumberland, and the tin mines of Cornwall and Devonshire.⁶

Besides gold and silver, the principal minerals which were exploited intensively prior to the dissolution were lead and tin. The majority of the known lead deposits were located in the north and west of England and in the Welsh

⁵J. U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966), 137; Ernest Straker, Wealden Iron (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), 32.

⁶G. R. Lewis, The Stannaries, Harvard Economic Studies, Vol. III, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1907), 18; J. W. Gough, The Mines of Mendip (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967), 109.

counties of Flint and Denbighshire. In England, The Pennine Hills, which extended southward from the Cheviot Hills to Derbyshire and Staffordshire, and the Mendip Hills of Somerset were the chief lead mining regions.

In the Pennine Hills, particularly in Derbyshire and Yorkshire, the earliest industrial activities were centered around lead mining. The church, including the various monastic houses, enjoyed large revenues from lead mining and tithes on lead ore. In Yorkshire, chiefly in the north and West Riding, the monastic communities of Bolton, Byland, Fountains, Jervaulx, Marrich, and Rievaulx were each known or believed to have been involved in the mining and refining of lead. Early in the history of Yorkshire lead mining, Jervaulx and Fountains were of noteworthy importance. In fact Jervaulx in the twelfth century was exporting surplus lead to French markets. In 1502 Fountains Abbey was attacked by the Merchant Adventurers of York "for selling lead and other goods".⁷

In the Mendip Hills of Somerset, lead mining was again largely under the control of the church. In 1189 Richard I granted the bishops of Bath and Wells extensive lead mining

⁷William Page, ed., Victoria County Histories of England, Derbyshire, Vol. II (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1970), 332. Hereafter cited as VCH; Arthur Raistrick, The Lead Industry of Wensleydale and Swaledale, Vol. I, The Mines (Buxton, England: Moorland Publishing Company, 1975), 19. Hereafter cited as Raistrick, The Mines.

rights in the area. In 1240 Henry III granted the abbey of St. Augustine in Bristol the right of mining lead on their lands. In 1283 the priory of Witham was granted the right to mine lead on their lands, and sometime during the same period the great abbey of Glastonbury was granted the mineral rights to lead on its estates. All in all, the lead mining rights extended to the church in Somerset gave the monks extensive control over the lead industry prior to the dissolution.⁸

The Mendip mining region was administered by the four Lords Royal of Mendip. They included the bishop of Bath and Wells, the abbot of Glastonbury, and the temporal lords of Chuton and Richmond. The surviving records of the abbots and priors of the Somerset monastic communities demonstrate that they viewed their lead mines largely as an administrative and financial matter. That is to say each of the monastic houses recorded only the royalties and tithes from the lead mines and nothing else. There are no records describing attempts to increase production, improve the state of the mines, or introduced new technology to the industry. Improvements necessary for industrial expansion were left to the miners themselves. However, unlike the wealthy abbots of Glastonbury, with their net yearly income of over £ 3,311, or those of St. Augustine, and Witham, these miners were

⁸Gough, The Mines of Mendip, 49-55.

not in a position to afford the cost of improvements and new technology.⁹

The importance of lead in late medieval English society cannot be over exaggerated. It was among the country's chief exports and the main material used throughout Europe in the roofing of all churches, castles, government buildings, and private dwellings of the upper and middle classes. The amount of lead produced in England is emphasized by the fact that, prior to the late sixteenth century, England had a near monopoly of all lead used in western Europe. At the time of the dissolution special attention was paid to the amount of lead on monastic roofs, and this lead was carefully stripped from the structures and taken back to London along with any jewels, gold, and silver.¹⁰

At the dissolution the lands of the monasteries, including their lead mines passed into the hands of the gentry. It was believed at the time that the lead mines of Mendip were exhausted, because their profits were declining steadily. In 1539 Thomas Cromwell characterized the lead mines of the

⁹Ibid., 65-68, 88. Neither the abbots of Glastonbury nor the abbots of Witham had records concerning their lead mining activities when the Valor Ecclesiasticus was made.

¹⁰W. C. Richardson, "Some Financial Expedients of Henry VIII", The Economic History Review 7 (- 1956): 39; G. W. O. Woodward, The Dissolution of the Monasteries (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 88.

region as "dead". However, the mines of Mendip were actually a long way from being finished.¹¹

The lead mining industry did experience a temporary setback after the dissolution as a result of the lead stripped from the monastic building creating a glut of surplus lead. But in the long-run the industry grew and expanded after the monks were removed from the scene. In both the Mendip Hills and the Pennines, the expansion of the lead mining industry was evident soon after the dissolution. In the Pennines, on one of the estates of Bolton Priory, was the manor of Appletreewick, the rights of which to the lead mine of Mungo Gill had been leased just prior to the dissolution by Sir Ingram Clifford. At the monastery's suppression Appletreewick passed through a number of hands. In 1539 Sir Christopher Hale purchased the manor, only to sell it later in the same year to Thomas Proctor. Proctor in turn sold the manor and its "mines and minerals" to Sir Arthur Darcy. During these various transactions, Sir Ingram Clifford continued to work the mine. With Darcy's purchase of Appletreewick, he sued to have Clifford removed from the property. Darcy's interest must have been centered on the Mungo Gill lead mines, for the court ordered that until the matter was settled Clifford was to return all lead ore which he and his men had taken from the mine. The issue was not

¹¹Gough, The Mines of Mendip, 65.

settled until 1559. However, by that time Clifford had subleased his interest in the mine to Thomas Proctor, who in turn subleased the mine to Robert Peacock and two other merchants of York, who were in the lead exporting business. Darcy too was removed from the Mungo Gill affair in 1549, when he sold the manor to Sir John Yorke.¹²

The estates that had formerly belonged to the monastic community of Byland possessed manors equally rich in lead deposits. After Byland's dissolution, Sir John Yorke purchased the manor known as Stonebeck. At that time Avery Uvedale was operating a lead mine on the Stonebeck lands. Court records show that Uvedale sued Yorke for not allowing him to take wood and timber necessary to his mining enterprise. Uvedale claimed that Yorke's refusal to allow him the necessary timber resulted in the loss of lead production valued at £ 56.¹³

Of equal importance to the Pennine lead industry was Fountains Abbey, which had a longstanding interest in lead mining. The earliest records of one of the most important lead mining regions, Grassington Moor, are found in the account books of Thomas Swynnton, Bursar of Fountains Abbey.

¹²Arthur Raistrick, Lead Mining in the Mid-Pennines: The Mines of Nidderdale, Wharfedale, Airedale, Ribblesdale, and Bowland (Truro, England: D. Bradford Barton, 1973), 23, 72. Hereafter cited as Raistrick, Lead Mining.

¹³Ibid., 22-24.

The records show that "Will'mo Coksen was paid 3/4 d. for lead ore which was latter refined in the abbey's mill at Brimham". At the dissolution all the lands belonging to Fountains Abbey were purchased by Sir Richard Gresham for investment purposes. In 1552 the vast majority of Fountains' former lands, the Nidderdale estate, were sold to Sir Arthur Darcy.¹⁴

Available evidence also shows that the priory of Marrick in the North Riding of Yorkshire had an interest in the region's lead industry. Early in its history the priory was granted the right to collect tithes on all lead mined in the dale of Marrick and Marske, but it appears that mining activities in the region were declining just prior to the dissolution. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, the monastery received 24 s. in tithes. However, within a century of its suppression, William Bulmer is known to have paid the owner of the rectory £ 750 in lead tithes.¹⁵

These few examples concerning the lead industry in the post-dissolution period demonstrate several key points. First, one can clearly see the extensive role of the monasteries in the lead industry before the dissolution. They owned and leased a majority of the lead mining sites.

¹⁴Ibid., 90.

¹⁵Raistrick, The Mines, 78.

Secondly, the records also show that the profits from the lead mines of Mendip and Pennines regions were low and declining just prior to the dissolution. Thirdly, following the dissolution the lay community took an aggressive interest in their newly acquired mineral wealth. The court records of the post-1540 period demonstrate this fact as new owners sued and were increasingly sued by holders of monastic leases. Finally, the results of the transference of monastic control over the lead industry to lay control served to increase production rates.

Technology introduced into the lead industry following the dissolution was limited. Traditionally Mendip and Pennine lead was refined through the utilization of wind furnaces and hand-operated bellows. The furnace itself was improved by building rotating furnaces which could be turned to obtain the best wind direction possible. William Humfrey greatly improved upon both the wind and rotating furnaces when he introduced the foot blast furnace and water powered bellows into the industry. This furnace, Humfrey stated, saved half the fuel used in the traditional smelting process, made use of the smallest pieces of lead ore and lead slag, and produced more lead. Humfrey received a royal patent for his ore-hearth furnace

which was used extensively for the next two centuries.¹⁶

A second major improvement in the lead industry was a sieve which William Humfrey is also credited with inventing. The sieve was used for preparing the lead ore for smelting. The ore was first crushed and then placed in the sieve to settle the heavier ore from the lighter rocks and spar. This device allowed the lead smelters to utilize old slag heaps and small pieces of ore which were not usually employed in the smelting process. Together these two improvements increased the amount of lead produced at mills where Humfrey's furnace and sieve were used.¹⁷

In tin mining the industry evolved in a different way, but still the church played an important role. The principal tin mining regions in England were located in the far southwest of Cornwall and Devonshire. In 1201 King John granted the tin miners of this region their first charter as free-miners. In this charter it stated that the stannaries had the right to dig for tin "freely . . . without hinderence . . . everywhere in moors and in the fiefs of bishops, abbots, and counts . . .".¹⁸

¹⁶Gough, The Mines of Mendip, 150; J. W. Gough, The Rise of the Entrepreneur (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 135-136; Musson, The Growth of British Industry, 77.

¹⁷Gough, The Mines of Mendip, 136; Raistrick, The Mines, 26.

¹⁸J. B. Richardson, Metal Mining (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1974), 53.

Although the stannaries were free to mine tin anywhere in Cornwall and Devon, the miners did not own the mines which they worked. Rather, according to the right of usufruct, the miners were required to work the mines constantly, pay special taxes to the crown as well as a percentage to the landlord, and to observe the laws of the free-miners' court. If they failed in any of these requirements, the mining site reverted back to the landlord.¹⁹

Tin miners paid the owner of the land a rent known as "tin toll". This toll was usually a percentage of the tin extracted, and it was required of all miners even if the mines operated at a loss. The crown, the church, and private landowners counted the income received from tin tolls as important additions to their revenues. In one case the government of Edward II granted the abbot of Tavistock, Robert Champeaus, the tin toll from the royal estates in Devonshire in return for a loan of £ 300. A year later, in 1319, the abbot was appointed warden of the Devonshire stannaries and keeper of the port of Dartmouth for a ten-year period. The abbot also obtained a lease of the royal tin revenues for a yearly rent of £ 100. The monastery must have realized a sizable profit from this venture, because in

¹⁹Lewis, The Stannaries, 70.

1325 Tavistock Abbey agreed to renew the lease at the increased rent of £ 113 6s. 8d.²⁰

The church also enjoyed the revenues from the tithes on tin mined within the various parishes of Cornwall and Devonshire. As described earlier, the majority of the parish tithes went to the large monastic communities through the practice of impropriations. In Devonshire the monasteries of Tavistock and Plympton were the largest and richest monastic communities and the greatest impropiators of parish churches. Plympton Priory, for example, owned eleven parish churches and nine chapels and it also received pensions from eight additional churches. In Cornwall the religious houses of Bodmin, St. Michael's Mount, and Truro were the most important. Combining the income received from the tin tolls, tithes on tin ore, and the various monopolistic practices which the abbots and priors of the area enjoyed, the monasteries had a significant role in the tin industry prior to their dissolution.²¹

The dissolution seems to have had little effect on the tin industry. Although the monasteries, both great and

²⁰Ibid., 160; H. P. R. Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, A Study in the Social and Economic History of Devon (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), 175. Hereafter cited as Finberg, Tavistock. The tin toll usually consisted of the fifteenth dish of tin ore taken from the various tin mines.

²¹Finberg, Tavistock, 27.

small, were no longer around, those who inherited the right to collect tin tolls and tithes on tin ore realized small if any profits. The chief reason for this was that the tin industry had fallen upon hard times. Tin was traditionally used in the manufacturing of pewter and bronze. But by the end of the sixteenth century, imports of foreign pewter and the rising quality of English china undercut English pewter sales. However, the most serious blow delivered to the tin industry came from a new English industry, brass making.²²

Prior to the dissolution, England obtained most of her brass from Nuremberg. This was a necessary import since the art of brass making was a carefully guarded secret and it was believed that England did not possess calamine (zinc carbonate), which was required along with copper to make brass. It was not until after 1566, when William Humfrey discovered calamine in the Mendip Hills of Somerset, that the brass industry was introduced into England. This discovery not only created a new industry, but it also stimulated England's stagnant copper industry and relieved England from foreign dependency of this vital material. In 1568, on the site of Tintern Abbey, William Humfrey reported the first successful manufacture of brass in England. However, the brass venture did not go smoothly for Humfrey, and in 1575

²²Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, 166.

he abandoned it altogether.²³

From 1575 until 1582 the English brass industry remained dormant. In the latter year Richard Martyn bought the rights to the Tintern brass works for an annual rent of £ 50. Shortly thereafter, Martyn, Andrew Palmer, and John Brode invested £ 1,134 16s. 11d. apiece in building metal hearths, water works, furnaces, stampers, bellows, and other buildings and equipment necessary for making brass. In 1588 disagreement among the partners forced Martyn out of the venture. Little seems to have been accomplished until Brode and Palmer later obtained a new seven-year lease. By 1594 the industry was thriving, producing brass wire and refined lead. Yet it would not be until the 1700's that the tin industry would fully recover with the introduction of tin plating.²⁴

Of the remaining minerals exploited aggressively prior to the dissolution, coal and iron were next in importance. Again the surviving records of various monasteries demonstrate the church's involvement in the coal industry. The monks of Finchale in Durham, for example, received £ 30 a

²³Gough, The Rise of the Entrepreneur, 117-121; M. B. Donald, Elizabethan Monopolies, the History of the Company of Mineral and Battery Works from 1565 to 1604 (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 179-183. Hereafter cited as Donald, Monopolies.

²⁴Ibid.

year from the leasing of a coal mine, while Durham Cathedral Priory received £ 180 a year from their coal bearing lands. Other monastic foundations shared an equal interest in coal mining. In Yorkshire the monastic houses of Jervaulx, St. Oswald, Nostell, Monk Bretton, Byland, St. Agatha's, and Fountains each possessed coal producing lands. In Cumberland, the monastery of St. Bees owned lands which would later be of fundamental importance to the coal industry. In Derbyshire, the abbeys of Beauchief, Darley, and Dale are known to have had an interest in the coal industry. In Glamorgan, the abbey of Neath possessed important coal deposits. When the various monastic sites are counted, one discovers that the bulk of all coal producing lands were owned by the monasteries and other ecclesiastical landlords. However, most of the monks were extremely conservative in the exploitation of their known coal deposits.²⁵

Records of ecclesiastical expenditures demonstrate that the religious communities did not invest large sums of capital necessary for the expansion of the coal industry. In addition to this fact the majority of religious foundations thought it more advantageous to lease their mineral rights to local residents. Often the terms of these mineral leases

²⁵R. B. Dobson, Durham Priory, 1400-1450 (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1973), 101; VCH, Yorkshire Vol. II, 340; VCH, Staffordshire Vol. II, 72-73; Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, 134-137.

were so rigid that they discouraged the growth of a flourishing coal industry.

In one lease, signed in 1447 by the prior of Durham and six would-be coal miners, much of the conservative attitude of the monasteries is clearly reflected. This lease stipulated that the miners were to produce 180 scoops of coal each workday. The annual rent for the mine was twenty English pounds, and the lease was to run for a period of but one year. In 1537 the monks of Byland leased a lead and coal mine on their manor of Nidderdale in Yorkshire, but required three loads out of every twenty removed from the mine. Similarly the monks of Beauvale restricted the number of miners, which in turn restricted the amount of coal taken from the mine. The leases of other establishments limited either the amount of coal which could be extracted from each mine or the days of the year during which the mines could be operated.²⁶

The conservative nature of the monastic landlords is obvious in the terms of the leases just considered. The productivity of the mining sites were severely limited, the rents were high, and the mining operations could be taken over by the monks or leased to others at the termination of

²⁶Nef. The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, 137-138; B. W. Clapp, et. al., Documents in English Economic History: England from 1000 to 1760 (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1977), 186-187.

the brief leasing periods. In many ways this conservative approach retarded the growth and development of coal mining in England.

Prior to the dissolution coal mining in England had developed to only a limited degree. Coal supplied the fuel needs of the people living near the pit-head, but even there it was among the poor that coal had its greatest appeal. This same element of appeal, cheapness, soon led to its adoption in the metallurgical industries. As early as 1552 one such metal worker, Thomas Barnabe stated, "I can live no more without coal than the fish without water".²⁷

Between 1560 and 1660 the coal industry experienced rapid growth. It was during these years that the production of coal rose by a factor of fourteen. But it was primarily the coal fields of the north, in Durham and Northumberland, that experienced the most sustained rate of growth, producing more than twenty times their pre-1560 levels by 1650.²⁸

It was highly unlikely that the growth of the coal industry would have occurred had the dissolution of the

²⁷Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, 202.

²⁸Arthur Joseph Slavin, The Borzoi History of England, Vol. III, 1450-1640, The Precarious Balance: English Government and Society (Los Angeles, California: Alfred A. Knoff, 1973), 252. Hereafter cited as Slavin, The Precarious Balance.

monasteries not happened when it did. As we have seen, the monks owned the majority of the coal-producing sites in the north, where the greatest growth in the coal industry took place. Had the confiscation of these properties not occurred, it seems probably that the conservative industrial practices of the monks would have continued.

In an overwhelming majority of cases, leases granted by lay landlords were less conservative, and the terms of the leases almost invited industrial development. Leases were usually granted for much longer periods, fewer than 21 years being uncommon. Lay landlords were less likely to restrict production or force tenants to pay obligations if the mining venture proved unprofitable. In fact crown leases were so liberal and rents so low that they encouraged even the most cautious investor to try his hand at coal mining. In 1570, for example, a mine at Oakthorpe in Derbyshire, was leased by the crown to Thomas Henshaw for a period of 21 years at an annual rent of £ 2. In 1575 George Bainbrigge leased a royal mine in Cockfield, formally belonging to St. Bees Priory, for a period of 21 years at an annual rent of £ 4 per pit. In Derbyshire, Henry Parker leased in 1537 a mine in Swanwick for an annual rent of £ 4. In 1538 John Frend obtained a royal lease to a coal mine formerly belonging to the nuns of St. Bartholomew in Durham for a period of 21 years at an annual rent of £ 6 13s. 4d. Many other

examples could be cited, but the point should be clear that once the laity came into possession of the mineral-rich monastic lands, a more liberal land management policy was instituted.²⁹

In regard to the iron industry, England possessed vast stretches of land rich in iron deposits. In the far north, particularly in Yorkshire, and in the southeast, in the area generally known as the Weald, the monasteries owned an impressive number of sites which would later be developed into important centers of iron and steel manufacturing. Historical evidence from such reliable sources as the Venerable Bede, demonstrate that many monks were "skilled in the forging and shaping of iron with the hammer".³⁰

In Yorkshire, the abbeys of Furness and Rievaulx exploited their iron deposits and assumed a leading role in the iron industry prior to the dissolution. In the Weald, lying chiefly in the counties of Kent, Sussex, and Surrey, the abbeys of Boxley, Tonbridge, and Robertsbridge each possessed significant iron ore deposits. The dissolution, however, transferred the mineral wealth of these monasteries to the laity and stimulated an increased interest in the iron

²⁹Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. II, 141-145.

³⁰H. R. Schubert, History of the British Iron and Steel Industry from 450 B.C. to A.D. 1775 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 64. Hereafter cited as Schubert, British Iron.

industry.

In the Wealden district during the 1530's, for example, there existed four known iron furnaces. But by 1548 there were fifty-three such works. Among those who established iron works, ordnance factories, and furnaces were Thomas Howard, third duke of Norfolk; Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset; Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland; and Sir Henry Sidney. The iron works owned by these men were scattered across England and demonstrate the expansion of the industry after the dispersal of the monastic lands. However, the best surviving records of these various iron works are those belonging to the earls of Rutland and the Sidney family.³¹

The Sidney Iron works at Robertsbridge in Sussex were begun quickly after the Cistercian abbey there was granted to Sir William Sidney in April 1539 in exchange for certain lands near Hull. There is no evidence that the monks of Robertsbridge had utilized the iron deposits on their lands. It is known that within two years after Sidney acquired the property, he established both a furnace and a forge at the cost of £ 253 14s. 8d. It is not clear whether Sidney realized the potential of Robertsbridge prior to his acquisition of the abbey or whether it was a matter of speculation. The

³¹Schubert, British Iron, 173.

Valor fails to mention the existence of any iron works or leases relating to the mining of iron ore on the Robertsbridge site. However, this oversight - if it is an oversight - should not come as a great surprise, because the Valor also failed to mention the existence of mining operations on estates owned by other monasteries where mining is known to have occurred.³²

In 1542 the Sidneys expanded their operations by building a second furnace on the Panningridge site in Sussex. This expansion continued in 1543, when a third furnace was erected in the parish of Ticehurst. Shortly thereafter Sidney temporarily closed the Robertsbridge works and moved the center of his operations to Panningridge. This move was caused by the discovery of a higher quality iron ore on the lands at Panningridge. This is one of the best examples of aggressive exploitation of former monastic lands by their new owners in an attempt to increase profits and the quality of the finished product.³³

Innovation and improvement continued under the direction of the Sidneys at both Panningridge and Robertsbridge. In 1564 the Sidneys imported foreign workmen who were knowledgeable

³²Savine, English Monasteries, 125; D. W. Crossley, "The Management of a Sixteenth Century Ironworks", The Economic History Review 19 (- 1966): 280.

³³Schubert, British Iron, 169; Gough, The Rise of the Entrepreneur, 77-79.

in the art of steel making. In 1565 Queen Elizabeth granted Sir Henry Sidney and his partners a lease which allowed them to employ up to 100 foreign workmen for the purpose of manufacturing iron and steel wire. Sidney tried to obtain a monopoly over the manufacturing of steel wire, but the House of Lords opposed his request. The monopoly was later granted to William Humfrey, who was perhaps favored over Sidney due to the fact that he was a key figure in the royal Mineral and Battery Works, a company formed in the spring of 1565 under royal charter.³⁴

The Rievaulx iron works, belonging to the earls of Rutland, are an additional illustration of how the acquisition of former monastic lands not only stimulated the iron industry, but also greatly improved the financial position of their new owners. In 1539 Thomas Manners, first earl of Rutland, received the great abbey of Rievaulx and fourteen manors belonging to Croxton Abbey from the crown in exchange for certain properties in Middlesex and Kent. Through this exchange the earl realized a net yearly profit of £ 283. Shortly thereafter he obtained Warters Priory and seven of its manors, and for the sum of £ 4,683 he purchased fifteen manors scattered throughout Yorkshire. Through these acquisitions of ex-monastic lands as well as service to the crown,

³⁴Gough, The Rise of the Entrepreneur, 80-81; Donald, Monopolies, 2.

the Manners family became the dominant social and political power in the north.³⁵

Of all the monastic properties acquired by Earl Thomas, the most valued was that of Rievaulx Abbey. The Manners had been patrons of the abbey and must have known of its iron works which, in 1530, consisted of two bloomeries valued at £ 20 a year. In 1540, almost immediately after the grant of Rievaulx, Thomas Manners began an extensive rebuilding of the iron works there. At great personal cost he first strengthened and heightened the existing dam to improve the water pressure which powered the water wheel, which in turn powered the bellows of the two bloomeries. He also installed an important improvement, a large water hammer, at the Rievaulx forge. By 1541 the Rievaulx iron works were producing forty-five tons of iron a year.³⁶

In 1543 Earl Thomas died and left his estate, still heavily in debt from a series of land purchases, to his son Henry. But it was not until Edward, the third earl of Rutland, inherited the Rutland estates in 1563 that the iron works at Rievaulx once again became an important aspect in the Manners's finances. Earl Edward managed every detail of

³⁵Lawrence Stone, Family and Fortune: Studies in Aristocratic Finances in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford, England: The Clarendon Press, 1973), 166. Hereafter cited as Stone, Family and Fortune. L&P Vol. 14 pt.1 no. 651.

³⁶Ibid., 190; Schubert, British Iron, 148, 346.

his estates, and it was he who was responsible for modernizing and reequipping the Rievaulx iron works.

In 1587 Earl Edward died and his brother John held the title for a brief ten-month period. During that time Earl John received £ 80 from the sale of iron. Between 1591 and 1600 the profits of the Rievaulx iron works varied from a high of £ 1,000 in 1595 to nothing at all during 1598 and 1599. This fluctuation, however, came to an end when Earl Roger, the sixth earl of Rutland, took steps to improve the market availability for Rievaulx iron.³⁷

In 1600 Earl Roger began to trade with various London merchants, to whom he initially sold eighty tons of iron. This transaction was necessary in order for the Manners to have a reliable market for their iron, and it naturally encouraged the expansion of the Rievaulx iron works. By 1605 the Rievaulx iron works were so successful that sales on the London market alone realized £ 4,201. This was indeed an important part of the total income of the earls of Rutland, and it demonstrates the successful exploitation of lands which seventy-five years before were producing £ 20 annually in iron.³⁸

Although England was rich in iron deposits, she lagged far behind her continental neighbors in the production of

³⁷Stone, Family and Fortune, 190-195.

³⁸Ibid., Schubert, British Iron, 346.

steel. Traditionally England imported much of her steel, particularly steel wire, from France. Steel wire was extremely important in the woollen industry where it was used in the making of woolcards. It was not until a suitable iron ore was discovered in Monmouthshire that steel wire could be produced in England. The site of the osmund iron ore deposit was found on lands which had formerly belonged to Tintern Abbey. In 1568 the former abbey was transformed into the Tintern Works by the Company of Mineral and Battery Works of which William Humfrey received the monopoly for making steel wire and later brass.³⁹

By the end of the sixteenth century England had progressed markedly in the manufacture of war armaments, iron and steel production, and in the manufacture of other metal products. Prior to the dissolution, England imported most of her heavy artillery. It was not until 1543 that the first iron cannon was cast in Sussex on the site of the former abbey of Buxted. By the seventeenth century England was producing enough iron and steel to meet all her military and domestic needs. This important industrial reversal owes much to the dispersal of the monasteries' landed wealth.⁴⁰

³⁹Gough, The Rise of the Entrepreneur, 85; Donald, Monopolies, 88-94.

⁴⁰Starker, Welden Iron, 48; Gough, The Rise of the Entrepreneur, 83.

The metallurgical industries represent some of the best examples of the process which swept through England's industrial sector following the dissolution. The century following the suppression of the monasteries was characterized by more and deeper mines, complex mining organizations, and more capital invested in the mining and metallurgical industries than ever before. But in addition to the mining and metal industries various other industries grew and developed once the monk's control over much of England's land and mineral wealth was removed. These industries included the brewing of beer, evaporation of salt water, making soap, refining of raw sugar, making candles, and bleaching and dying cloth.⁴¹

Of these smaller industries, salt making was perhaps the most important in an age of expanding population and inadequate means of preserving food. Prior to the dissolution this industry seems to have been largely the domain of small craftsmen and peasants. Little capital was invested and the industry remained small and underdeveloped. Several of the monastic communities which bordered the sea were involved in salt making. The monastery of Tynemouth in Northumberland, for example, owned a majority of the sites suitable for salt production. But as late as 1526 the

⁴¹Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, 214.

monastery received only £ 61 annually from salt manufacturing.⁴²

Not until after the dissolution did the salt industry begin to expand rapidly. Evaporating pans increased in size from small lead tubs to great iron pans with diameters in excess of twenty feet. Wood was replaced by coal as the fuel used for evaporation, and large-scale operations replaced small craftsmen and peasants as the chief producers of salt. Customs revenues collected on salt show the remarkable increase in the nation's salt-making capabilities. In the region of the Firth of Forth duties collected between 1550 and 1560 came to only £ 17 17s. 6d. During the next decade the customs duties rose to £ 1,195. The salt works of Tynemouth were also greatly improved after the suppression of that monastery. In 1634 Sir William Brereton described the manufacturing operations in a letter, according to which there were twenty-four evaporating pans and twelve furnaces employed at the Tynemouth works. Each day the works produced salt worth £ 4 16s., which in a year came to £ 1,400. This was a great improvement over the monks' yearly production of £ 61.⁴³

⁴²Ibid., 175; Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 167; John U. Nef, Industry and Government in France and England; 1540-1640 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), 101-102.

⁴³Jack, Trade and Industry, 170; Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. I, 117.

The smaller industries of soap making, sugar refining, and cloth dyeing experienced similar advances. Common features to each of these industries were technological improvements, more complex factors of organization, and additional capital invested to expand and improve existing production facilities. These industries along with mining and metal working demonstrate that during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, England became more industrialized than ever before. In the century following the dissolution, England in fact emerged as one of Europe's most industrialized nations. More of the industrial sector was drawn together as coal became the chief industrial fuel and iron the chief industrial metal. More industrial patents were issued at this time in order to solve England's drainage problems in her deep mines. More capital was invested in the industrial sector to relieve England of her traditional dependency on other nations for manufactured articles. More complex organization of industries became required as the cost of industrial expansion and improvement became too expensive for the single investor. Collectively these developments within the industrial sector are impressive. However, it must be kept in mind that these various advancements failed to produce a mature industrial society, in the modern sense.

Despite the increased levels of industrial productivity

there is little or no evidence to suggest that England, during the so-called sixteenth-century industrial revolution, emerged as a leading exporter of manufactured goods. There are few signs which suggest that in industries other than coal mining England developed a mass home market for its industrial goods. Even less evidence exists to suggest that the cost of living declined as a result of industrial growth. These three characteristics of industrial advancement can only be attributed to a mature industrial society and not to one just beginning to emerge. The English felt the positive effects of expanding markets and declining costs only in the agricultural sector of the economy. Not until the late seventeenth century did agriculture cease to receive a majority of the nation's investment capital.

CHAPTER IV
THE DISSOLUTION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION
TO AGRICULTURE

Following the dissolution, the agricultural sector remained the dominant economic force in England for the next two centuries. Much like the industrial sector, the movement in church lands had a significant impact on traditional farming methods. As we have seen, much of the church's landed wealth was transferred to a new class of landowners. This new class consisted largely of the lesser gentry, owner-occupiers, and large tenant farmers. It was largely on farms owned or leased by these people that the real advancements in agriculture took place. Equally important to the transformation of England's agricultural sector were the pressures of population growth, which made the demand for land acute and increased the pool of cheap labor significantly. Furthermore, England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries experienced a dramatic increase in prices which forced farming to become a commercial business and undermined the personal relationship between landlord and tenant. For a majority of the country's population the basic quality of life declined.

The combined pressures of population and rising prices necessitated a revolution in England's agricultural sector.

Prior to the dissolution, agricultural techniques of both clerical and lay landowners were virtually indistinguishable one from the other. Increased production was limited solely to bringing additional land under cultivation. Besides sheep farming there is little or no evidence to suggest that agriculture experienced any innovative farming techniques or commercial expansion prior to the dissolution. However, just prior to the first attacks on the church, there were many signs that a new agrarian spirit was emerging.¹

From about 1500 onward there was an increasing demand for literature on improved farming methods. The most influential book on agricultural techniques was Fitzherbert's 1523 edition of the Book of Husbandry. Between 1523 and 1600 this work went through eight editions. Not since the thirteenth-century had such an interest in farming been apparent in England. The renewed interest was aimed at improving farming methods and increasing the productivity of the soil.²

The importance of this interest in agricultural literature lies in the fact that it helped to spread agrarian

¹Rowland E. P. Ernle, English Farming: Past and Present (New York: Longmans Green, 1932), 91-92.

²Ernle, English Farming; Past and Present, 93. Joan Thirsk, The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol. IV, 1500-1640 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), 161. Hereafter cited as Thirsk, The Agrarian History.

innovations from one section of England to another. Perhaps one of the first agricultural practices which these books encouraged was the enclosure of land. As early as 1523, Fitzherbert maintained that land enclosed was more valuable than land in common.³

Landlords across England defended their innovative agricultural practices, such as enclosure, from an economic point of view. One landowner, pointing to his worsening economic plight stated, "Such as us [who live] in the country still can not with £ 200 a year keep that house, that we might have done with 200 marks but sixteen years ago". In order to maintain their present social position, the English landlord was forced to raise revenues which many felt could not be done if their lands remained in the hands of other men.⁴

Enclosure of land was not a new characteristic of farming, but one which was as old as farming itself. Both clerical and lay landlords enclosed lands, reclaimed waste lands, drained fens, and encroached on the commons, but these practices themselves did nothing to alter the productivity

³John Fitzherbert, The Book of Surveying and Improvements (London: 1523; reprint ed., Norwood, New Jersey: Walter J. Johnson, Inc., 1974), 2-3.

⁴Edward P. Cheyney, Philology Literature and Archaeology, Vol. IV, no. 2 Social Changes in England in the Sixteenth Century (New York: AMS Press, 1895), 56. Hereafter cited as Cheyney, Social Changes.

of the soil. One ear of corn and one blade of grass grew where but one had grown before and nothing changed. Whether a section of England remained open-field or was enclosed had little to do with the degree of progress made in agriculture. If farming techniques remained the same on both an open and an enclosed field then the building of hedge walls contributed nothing to the level of agricultural productivity. Only when new farming techniques were applied to enclosed lands could true agricultural progress be realized. When the land itself was improved and this improvement was evident in the increased productivity of the soil, then and only then could agrarian progress occur.⁵

The most important factor which determines how the land is utilized is the nature of the product to be produced. The choice of which product is to be raised is usually determined by its market value. Prior to the mid-sixteenth century this was only true with regard to sheep farming. Most other forms of agrarian pursuits were determined by tradition and local custom. With the passing of the church's control over a significant proportion of the land, this at last changed. The agricultural entrepreneurs of the post-dissolution period were affected less by tradition and more by economic considerations when choosing their agrarian

⁵Eric Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 14-40.

pursuits. This fact becomes apparent in an examination of England's changing agricultural markets.⁶

During the first half of the sixteenth century the woollen industry was the most profitable agricultural endeavor. This was soon to change, but the fact that it was the largest exporting industry in the country encouraged the wholesale conversion of permanent arable land to permanent pasture land. Landowners throughout England did this, particularly those who owned large farms and were free of communal farming restrictions. Had the dissolution not taken place, it is unlikely that a sweeping conversion of church lands would have occurred. Between 1525 and 1535 clerical landlords demonstrated no concern for altering traditional farming methods. Most ecclesiastical landowners leased their properties to small farmers, and typically these small farms consisted of a few strips of land here and a few strips of land there. This intermingling of farms within the confines of a given manor inhibited agricultural improvement.⁷

Once free of the restrictions of tradition and the church, the English landowner based his agrarian pursuits on the financial concerns of the market place. This fact is

⁶R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Burt Franklin, 1912), 214.

⁷Ibid., 221-222.

perhaps best demonstrated in the resulting changes in farming, which followed the Duke of Northumberland's devaluation of the currency in 1551. This financial move on the part of the government forced buyers of English wool and woollen cloth to pay twice the normal selling price. This resulted in the crash of the English woollen market and the depression of the woollen industry, and it forced landowners across England to reconvert their pastures to tillage.⁸

Between 1551 and the late 1570's the production of grain dominated the agricultural sector. During that time an equilibrium was reached between supply and demand for grain, and prices declined slightly. Following the economic reforms of Elizabeth I, the price of wool increased significantly, and an equilibrium was also reached between markets for wool and grain. This was an important development which transformed England into an exporter of both wool and grain.⁹

The mid-sixteenth century was a major turning point in English agrarian history. It was at this time that all the central factors for an agricultural revolution came into play. Population growth and rising food prices were

⁸Thirsk, The Agrarian History, 639; John Fitzherbert, Book of Husbandry (London: Edward White, 1598; reprint ed., Norwood, New Jersey: Walter J. Johnson Inc., 1979), 45.

⁹Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 181.

the two most important. Combined with these were a renewed interest in agrarian literature and a careful examination of farming methods and techniques. Of great importance was the dissolution of the monasteries, intercessory institutions, and the attack on the episcopal lands, which released a vast amount of land for development. At the same time the traditional economic atlas, the woollen industry, entered a significant slump, while interest in arable husbandry was renewed and stimulated by the rising cost of agricultural products and the affordability of agricultural laborers. When these factors merged they formed the economic stimulus for the agrarian transformation which occurred in the period following the dissolution.¹⁰

It is far easier to trace the conditions leading to the onset of the agricultural revolution during this period than to deduce the origins of the various components comprising the agrarian transformation. Unlike the advancements in the industrial sector, which left their mark upon the landscape in the form of mining shafts, refining buildings, and old slag heaps, locating where the first carrot was planted or where turnips were first introduced is an exceedingly difficult task. Often it is only possible to

¹⁰D. C. Coleman, The Economy of England, 1450-1750 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 37; Thirsk, The Agrarian History, 204; Joyce Youings, The Dissolution of the Monasteries (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1971), 126.

locate the general region which supported these crops and little more. Many of the elements comprising the agrarian transformation were not new to English farming. Some had been practiced successfully in one part of the nation and were introduced to the rest of the country during this period. Crops such as carrots, turnips, cabbages, and others had been grown in kitchen gardens from time immemorial, but became widespread during this period as animal fodder. Thus, the ability to pinpoint the location where innovative farming practices occurred first is often obscure. This fact, however, should in no way detract from the central argument of this chapter, that the dissolution of the monasteries provided a significant stimulus to the revolution in agriculture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Components of the agricultural revolution not new to English farming included enclosure and conversion. As we have seen enclosure was an age old practice of both ecclesiastical and lay landowners. Even the conversion of arable land to pasture land was practiced in regions where sheep farming was particularly important to the local economy. Monastic communities in the North often converted parts of their lands into sheep-walks. However, the degree to which these changes took place never reached the level of those following the dissolution.

Perhaps the most important element of the agrarian transformation was the adoption of the system known as up-and-down husbandry. The adoption of this system had its origins in the mid-sixteenth century, when arable and pasture farming was beginning to come into market equilibrium. This system replaced the traditional permanent arable and permanent pasture farming practices for a significant part of the nation. This single technique is credited with revolutionizing English agriculture. No other single innovation of the period had such a profound impact on farming. This one development changed the productivity of the soil, cut production costs, and increased yields per acre. As Professor Eric Kerridge has stated, it was the backbone of the agricultural revolution.¹¹

Like many features of the agrarian transformation, the system of up-and-down husbandry was not a completely new idea. Agricultural writers of the period, such as Fitzherbert, wrote about it as early as 1535. William Marshall stated that up-and-down husbandry was utilized in certain areas "since time immemorial".

The exportation of the up-and-down system may have been due to the renewed interest in agricultural literature which dominated the period after 1550. It is known that the system was centered in the northwestern part of the Midland

¹¹Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 181.

Plain, and from there it spread to other regions after 1560. Between 1590 and 1660 the up-and-down system replaced the system of permanence. Its success was due chiefly to its vast improvement over the former system.¹²

Up-and-down husbandry consisted of a grass-arable rotation. When the land was in the grass cycle, or laid down, the object of farming became animal husbandry. During this period usually three-fourths of the land was laid down and grazing animals were fattened on the rich grassy fields. Dairy cattle, beef cattle, and sheep were the main livestock to benefit from this system. These newly created pastures produced a better quality of grass than did older pastures. Young grasses of every species are more nutritional than grasses in permanent pastures. There is substantial evidence to demonstrate an important change in the quality of pasture lands as they age. With age the botanical constitution of the pasture changes as more undesirable grasses and weeds enter the lea. When a pasture is new, the increased nutritional intake is reflected in the production of larger quantities of milk and meat. Fitzherbert wrote, "young grasses fatten beeves and mutton better and give more milk and richer cheese." Walter Bith stated, ". . . your new layd-down-land . . . doth put more prooffe into all sorts of

¹²Ibid., 193.

goods, breed better, feed faster, milketh fruitfuller than old pasture . . .".¹³

Not only did the animals benefit from the conversion of arable to pasture, but the soil benefited as well. Animal waste products are very beneficial for soil productivity. Animal dung contains a number of important elements which increase the fertility of the soil. Nitrogen is one of these important elements, and scientists estimate that the dung of grazing animals contains one to five percent nitrogen in the dry matter. Much of that nitrogen is resistant to decomposition and only twenty-five percent of the total nitrogen content becomes available for plant utilization.¹⁴

Phosphorus is a second soil nutrient contained in dung. About seven-tenths of the dung dry matter is phosphorus, but all seven-tenths becomes available for plant utilization. Both nitrogen and phosphorus increase grass production and are beneficial to other crops.¹⁵

Urine is also a valuable waste by-product of grazing animals which serves to increase the fertility of the soil. Urine alone contains about seventy percent of all the nitrogen

¹³A. H. Charles and R. J. Haggard, eds., Changes in Sward Composition and Productivity (London: Inprint of Luton, 1979), 7. Hereafter cited as Charles and Haggard, Changes in Sward; Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 205.

¹⁴Charles and Haggard, Changes in Sward, 132.

¹⁵Ibid.

and close to all the potassium taken from the land by grazing animals. The effect of urine on grass production is especially important. The nitrogen released to the soil normally lasts two to three months before it is exhausted in plant consumption. Potassium released to the soil may be effective for a much longer period ranging up to two years.¹⁶

Prior to the spread of the up-and-down system, farmers were forced either to apply manure manually to their arable lands or to place their livestock in the fields to manure it. Fitzherbert described the process in chapter twenty-one of his book on husbandry. He stated, "let not your sheep out presently, but rayle them up, and let them . . . dung and pisse".¹⁷

Utilizing and up-and-down system, the farmer accomplished much of the needed fertilizing during the pasture period. All that remained for him to do was to apply additional dressings, such as sand, lime, and marl, and then reconvert his pasture to tillage. The success of the up-and-down system was based on the premise that nothing was wasted, not even a blade of grass or any of the animal's waste by-products. Everything taken from the soil, which was not

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Fitzherbert, Book of Husbandry, 29.

used in the production of milk, meat, or wool, was returned to the soil.

Transforming old pasture lands to arable fields was a more difficult process. Old pastures were usually infested with wireworms and letherjackets, and it took a considerable amount of work to remove these pests. Burning, rolling, harrowing, and allowing the land to lie fallow for eighteen months usually rid the soil of these nuisances. Once lands had been reconverted, the arable cycle lasted between four and seven years, depending upon the amount and type of additional dressings added. The secret to a successful return to pasture was not to exhaust the soil while in the arable period. Grasses returned faster, and the pasture obtained its best texture if the soil still had some "heart" to it.¹⁸

The benefits of the up-and-down system were acknowledged by farmers across England and Wales. They were quick to realize that the nutrients in temporary pastures were superior to permanent pastures. This was evident in the health and quality of all grazing livestock. In much the same way the yields from arable crops increased greatly after temporary pastures were tilled. However, the benefits from the up-and-down system did not stop with improved nutrition and soil fertility.

¹⁸Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 196-197, 200.

The system of convertible husbandry changed the nature of the surface and subsurface soil. Ploughing up pastures removed ant hills and moles, which created pools of standing water, from the land. These pools of water were the source of serious diseases contracted by sheep. Sheep were particularly vulnerable to contracting liver flukes and rot. Richard Flaxney, "an experienced gentleman farmer from Charwelton", claimed that disease among sheep was a serious problem and the trouble came from the ground. Flaxney himself was forced to move lame sheep to newly ploughed pastures where they recovered. The symptom and cure which Flaxney spoke of must have been sheep rot. Liver flukes at that time had no cure, although they could be controlled.¹⁹

Liver flukes have an unusual life cycle, utilizing one or more required hosts. The adult liver fluke, Fasciola hepatica, resides in the bile ducts of sheep and other grazing animals. The animal contracts liver flukes by ingesting the eggs of the adult known as cercaria while grazing along creeks and in damp pastures. Sheep infected with liver fluke suffer from extensive liver damage. The external symptoms reveal excess amounts of fluid in the abdominal cavity, usually stained with blood, and the membrane of the eye is congested. Fitzherbert, in his book on husbandry described the symptoms in the following manner.

¹⁹Ibid., 204-205; Thirsk, The Agrarian History, 188.

"If the eye be white like tallow . . . then he is rotten . . . if the skin be pale coloured and watery he is then rotten".²⁰

The best way to control the spread of liver flukes is to plough and drain the land where animals graze. These two methods of improvement were extensively undertaken from the late sixteenth century onward. With improved management of pasture land the livestock were better fed, healthier, and were able to grow to their true potential. Sheep were not the only farm animals to benefit from the new farming system. All forms of livestock husbandry were released from the confines of the traditional form of stock management and entered a period of great flexibility.

Perhaps the most important development in livestock farming was the introduction of new fodder crops. The principal fodder crops were roots, coles, clover, and grasses. Most of the roots and coles were grown as table vegetables long before they became fodder for livestock. The important new vegetable crops introduced in England between 1550 and 1700 consisted of carrots, turnips, cabbages, rape, potatoes, and cauliflower. Carrots were introduced about the beginning of the sixteenth century, possibly from

²⁰H. G. Belschner, Sheep Management and Diseases (Sydney, Australia: Halstead Press, 1971), 616-632; Fitzherbert, Book of Husbandry, 56-57

Holland. They quickly became an important table vegetable because of their sugar, mineral salt, and vitamin content. Carrots were well known in the Sandling regions of north-eastern Essex and East Suffolk, where the land consisted largely of sandy soil on a sandy base. This type of soil structure allowed the carrots to develop extremely well. From 1590 onward carrots were being exported from the Sandling country to other areas. By 1618 they were reported doing well in the Beckland area of Suffolk and in East Norfolk.²¹

A second important fodder crop, and the one which has received the most attention, was turnips. Introduced from Holland in the late sixteenth century as a table vegetable, turnips were recognized quickly as a field fodder crop. Between 1646 and 1656 turnip farming became an established agricultural practice. Daniel Defoe credited the region known as High Suffolk as the area where feeding and fattening of cattle with turnips was first practiced. William Marshall in 1811 mistakenly credited the Townshend family with the introduction of turnips to the Norfolk region. Somewhat earlier Arthur Young stated that turnips were cultivated extensively in Hertfordshire prior to their introduction in Norfolk. From the evidence gathered by

²¹Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 17, 229.

Eric Kerridge, it seems clear that the High Suffolk region of East central Essex, Suffolk, and southern Norfolk were the original areas of turnip husbandry.²²

In Hereford, Devon, and Cornwall, turnips became the principal grass supplement for winter feed. Like carrots, turnips could be either stored or left in the ground until required by the livestock. During the winter months turnips could be taken to the fields or pulled from the ground and fed to the cattle. The dairy and cattle industries were the chief beneficiaries of turnip husbandry. Utilizing turnips as winter feed allowed dairymen and cattlemen to maintain their herds at full capacity without being forced to reduce the size of their herds due to shortages of winter feed. During the winter months turnips were used along with straw and hay for fodder, which allowed milk production to continue throughout the winter and helped to make winter beef more readily available. However, of all the new fodder crops, turnips were less nutritional than carrots, more difficult to grow than cabbages, and more

²²Eric Kerridge, "Turnip Husbandry in High Suffolk", The Economic History Review 69 (- 1954): 390; Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 270-272; William Marshall, A Review of the Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the Eastern Department of England (York, England: Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1818), 349. Arthur Young, General View of the Agriculture of Hertfordshire (London; B. McMillan, 1804; reprint ed., Plymouth, England: David and Charles, 1971), 102.

vulnerable to frosts and thaws than Swedish turnips.²³

During the spring and summer months, the main source of animal feed was pasture grasses. Grasses considered the best for grazing and hay were clover, white melilot, milfoil, cinquefoil, trefoil, sainfoin, and lucerne. By 1607 pasture farmers were experimenting with mixing white and red clover seed with rye and other grasses. This mixture, usually two parts perennial rye-grass to one of either red or white clover, was thought to provide the best pasture grass. By 1675 the use of rye-grass and clover was commonly employed in the down period of convertible husbandry.²⁴

By the mid-seventeenth century almost every different soil region had its own unique mixture of grasses. In the High Suffolk area a mixture of perennial red clover and the traditional meadow grass, known as Suffolk grass, became the principal pasture grass. Suffolk grass was resistant to the dry climate and was constantly reseeding itself. Combined with the nutrient rich clover, the pastures in the High Suffolk region were long in duration and rich in nutrients.²⁵

²³J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880 (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 55; Kerridge, The Economic History Review, 392.

²⁴Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 281-282; Thirsk, The Agrarian History, 180.

²⁵Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 284.

Sainfoin was adopted by farmers of the infertile chalky grounds of the Cotswold region. In this area where little else would grow, sainfoin grew well. It provided good pastures which lasted five years, but provided only one mowing per year. By 1675 sainfoin had become the accepted form of pasture grass, and owing to it the region became more profitable as a sheep farming district. However, the big improvement which the new grasses provided was the lowering of hay costs.²⁶

In 1673 John Aubrey remarked that the new grasses had reduced the cost of hay from "three pounds to twenty shillings per load". With the reduction in hay prices, the cost of animal husbandry declined sharply and the savings seem to have been passed on to the consumer. In 1676 William Petty credited the lowering of food prices to the improved uses of clover. The up-and-down system seems to have fostered one improvement in farming after another. The search for better grasses for either long or short leys was not only successful, but its effects were to lower the cost of hay, reduce food prices, and improve the quality of beef and mutton.²⁷

It seems ironic that the yields of arable crops were increasing at the same time the amount of land under

²⁶ Ibid., 278.

²⁷ Ibid., 281.

cultivation was declining in the up-and-down system. Yet this was in fact the case. The yield from one acre in the up-and-down system was as much as three acres farmed in the traditional manner. Thus, if the amount of land under cultivation was reduced by one-half the product obtained while utilizing the convertible system was still above the customary yields. At the same time the cost of arable husbandry declined. Eric Kerridge has estimated that the cost of corn production on land in common fields was three times as high as that on lands utilizing the up-and-down method.²⁸

Equally important to arable husbandry was the renewed interest in fertilizers. While it appears that no new fertilizers were introduced in the period 1560 to 1760, it is known that more manure and other dressings were applied to the soil than ever before. Every region had its own particular mixture of animal waste by-products and other refuse which it applied to the land. Farmers near the coast used seaweed and sea-sand; those near mines and manufacturing centers used coal ash, soap ash, and pulverized slag; those farmers near the large urban centers carted away tons of various waste products which towns and cities produced in abundance. However, of all the dressings applied,

²⁸Ibid., 207-209.

lime, sea-sand and marl were the most commonly used.²⁹

Fitzherbert, in 1598, described marl as an excellent form of manure for arable crops. Marl is an important element in increasing soil fertility. Consisting largely of a clay mixture with carbonate of lime, marl tends to lighten heavy soils, correct acidity, and promote nitrification. Different marl types were applied to different soil structures. Chalk marls were applied to clay soils, while clay marls were best suited for sandy soils. Depending on the soil type, the amount of marl applied varied from 300 to 500 cart loads per acre. The best time to apply marl was generally just before pasture lands were converted to tillage. Lands well-marled were noted for allowing between six and nine crops before being returned to pasture.³⁰

Sea-sand was used extensively in areas along the coasts, but was of particular importance in Cornwall and Devonshire. Sand mixed with tough heavy soils produced a milder soil structure more suitable for growing crops. It usually took between 250 and 300 sacks of sea-sand per acre of land to be tilled. Sand from the beaches was either applied directly to the land or was mixed with manure and other dressings before being laid on the land. The result of either method

²⁹Ibid., 243-244.

³⁰Fitzherbert, Book of Husbandry, 28; Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 245-246.

was to improve the soil for both arable crops and for the next pasture grasses.³¹

The renewed interest in lime was perhaps one of the most important forms of agricultural improvement. The most interesting feature of lime is that it reduces soil acidity which inhibits plant growth. Lime also alters the soil structure making the soil more suitable for cultivation. In areas of light soil the addition of lime inhibits the formation of hard surfaces which hinder the germination of seeds. In areas of heavier soils, lime creates pockets in the soil allowing water and air to penetrate deeper into the ground. Fitzherbert described how lime was produced for agricultural utilization. He stated, "And in many countries where plentie of lyme stonne is, the husbandes do bren the lyme stonne with wood and seacoale and make lyme thereof".³²

The use of lime was widespread in the north, west, and east of England. The vast Midland Plain utilized lime to a lesser extent owing to its chalk and limestone substructure which reduced acidity. But it was precisely those regions deficient in a chalk or limestone base which were experiencing

³¹Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 244.

³²Fitzherbert, The Book of Surveying and Improvement, 48; Michael Havinden, Lime as a Means of Agricultural Improvement: The Devon Example, eds., C. W. Chalkin and M. A. Havinden, Rural Change and Urban Growth: 1500-1800 (New York; Longman, 1974), 109. Hereafter cited as Havinden, Lime.

the majority of the agricultural revolution. In the north and west, where permanent pasture lands were being converted to tillage, extensive amounts of lime were required to produce arable crops. John Norden, in his Surveyors Dialogue, of 1594, described how the "industrious people" obtained limestone, erected lime kilns, and produced quick lime on their own farms.³³

The renewed interest in fertilizers contributed greatly to the increased productivity of both animal and vegetable products. Whatever the local dressing happened to be, from London's night soil in Hertfordshire, sea-sand and lime in Devonshire, red-marl and farmyard dung in Gloucestershire, or seaweed in Dorsetshire, they all served to increase the fertility of the soil which in turn enhanced the productivity of each acre of land. Thus, it became possible to reduce the amount of land under cultivation while

³³John Norden, The Surveyor's Dialogue, Very Profitable for all Men to Pervse, but especially for Gentlemen, Farmers, and Husbandmen, that shall either have occasion, or be willing to buy, hire, or sell Lands: as in the ready and perfect Surveying of them, with the manner and Method of Keeping a Court of Survey with many necessary rules and familiar tables to that purpose (London: Thomas Shodham, 1618; reprint ed., Norwood, New Jersey: Walter J. Johnson Inc., 1979), 224; Havinden, Lime, 113.

increasing the yields from each acre.³⁴

Sixteenth-century agriculturalists were not satisfied with improving the lands which were traditionally used as pasture and tillage. Like farmers of the thirteenth century, those industrious people of this period were involved with extending the amount of land under cultivation. One of the principal areas to be brought under the plow between 1560 and 1720 were the fens. As early as 1577 William Harrison stated, "marshes and fenny bogs we have many in England . . .".³⁵

The marshes and fenny bogs which Harrison described stretched around England: along the coast of the English Channel, in the vast region of land in southeastern Yorkshire and in east Lincolnshire, in the Saltings and Sandlings of Suffolk and Essex, and in other regions. The marshes and fens were reclaimed and converted to pasture or arable land by a complicated process of walling and pumping water out until natural grasses could grow.

³⁴William Marshall, A Review of the Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the Western Department of England (York England: Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1818; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 408-409; William Marshall, A Review of the Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the Southern and Peninsula Departments of England (York, England: Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1818; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 14, 276, 554.

³⁵Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 222; William Harrison, The Description of England (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), 283.

Prior to the dissolution of the monasteries, the fens were largely under the supervisory powers of the local monastic houses and the other great landowners in the fen-land regions. The reports of the Commission of Sewers demonstrates this fact, but fail to describe to what degree these landowners maintained the water passages which drained the low lying lands. With the suppression of the monasteries, the responsibilities of the monks were transferred to the laity. Immediately following the dissolution the maintenance of draining devices entered a period of neglect. However, by the last quarter of the sixteenth century the new owners had begun aggressively to assault the problem of fen drainage.³⁶

Throughout the country new drains were constructed, and the reclaimed lands began to be used for agricultural purposes. As early as 1560 over two-thirds of the Saltings' fens were walled and drained. In 1568 a new drain, the Maud Foster drain, was constructed in the Lincolnshire fens.³⁷

Accomplishments such as the draining of most of the Saltings, and the construction of new drains and other projects, demonstrate another facet of the agricultural

³⁶H. C. Darby, The Draining of the Fens (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), 9-10.

³⁷Ibid., 15.

reawakening that was taking place. People were aware that the reclamation of fens and marshes were economically advantageous. Recovered marshes and fens were worth far more than other lands. The soils of these drained areas were extremely rich and easy to work. However, before 1560 the reclamation process was slow, with only twenty to thirty acres being retrieved at a time.³⁸

Between 1590 and 1650 an enormous burst of reclamation activity took place, particularly in the great fen regions of southeastern Yorkshire and eastern Lincolnshire. In 1601 Parliament passed a General Draining Act aimed at the recovery of thousands of acres of marshes and moors, but the government lacked the capital to enforce the act. Although the government was clearly favorable to the reclamation project, it was left to individual agricultural entrepreneurs to proceed with the draining of the fens.³⁹

Numerous schemes were set in motion to reap the benefits of fen drainage. John Watts, a citizen and alderman of London, Sir William Cockayne, a London skinner, and various others joined together in a project to drain 3,000 acres. In return for draining and maintaining this area, these men were to receive half the reclaimed waste lands. They

³⁸Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, 227.

³⁹Ibid., 234; Darby, The Draining of the Fens, 29.

accomplished their task as projected and obtained half the land recovered. In 1630 Francis Russell, fourth earl of Bedford, agreed to drain a vast track of marshy waste land known as the Bedford Level. By this agreement he was to receive 95,000 acres of drained land, owing to the great expense of the project. Of this 95,000 acres the earl agreed to use 40,000 for the maintenance of the drainage works. In addition he promised to turn over 12,000 acres to the crown.⁴⁰

The earl's request was duly approved by the Commissioners of Sewers, and thirteen other entrepreneurs joined with the earl to finance the project. Similar projects were undertaken in nearly every fenland region, resulting in the reclamation of hundreds of thousands of acres of land. After proper draining, this land was some of the best arable and pasture ground in England.⁴¹

Drying out excessively wet land was the object of this important innovation in agriculture. Another, floating watermeadows, consisted of temporarily flooding pasture land to enrich the soil. Like the retrained marshes and fens, meadows which were briefly flooded were superior, in terms of the rich grasses produced, to typical dry

⁴⁰Darby, The Draining of the Fens, 32-40.

⁴¹Ibid., 40.

pastures. The first known experiment with artificial irrigation of meadows was conducted in the late sixteenth century by Rowland Vaughan. Vaughan described his process in a work he published in 1610, The Most Approved and Long Experienced Waterworks.⁴²

A flooded meadow was usually covered with water to a depth of about one inch. Meadows were usually flooded before the first frost and remained flooded until after the danger of frost was past. In this way the grass was protected from the effects of frost. Upon the arrival of spring, the meadows were drained. This was accomplished through the use of a series of small drainage ditches which emptied into a drain that returned the water to the river. Meadows managed in this manner produced pastures four times as rich as dry pastures. Rowland Vaughan stated that his project cost £ 2,000. However, the rewards were equally high.⁴³

From the information presented above one can clearly see that the agricultural revolution of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had its largest impact on the production of livestock feed. The up-and-down system reduced the amount of land under cultivation without reducing

⁴²Thrisk, The Agrarian History, 180.

⁴³Ibid., 181.

the yields of arable crops. At the same time the new system of convertible husbandry increased the amount of pasture land. Besides the introduction of potatoes, tobacco, and a few other crops, the important new crops achieved their greatest standing as animal fodder. Carrots, cabbages, rape, and turnips were each significant fodder crops which revolutionized the state of animal husbandry. In much the same way the introduction of new grasses and the blending of traditional grasses with new grasses altered the nature and nutritional level of England's pastures.

Prior to the dissolution period, the growing and storing of ample supplies of winter feed was a serious problem for all English farmers. With the introduction of the convertible system and the new fodder crops and grasses, the size of herds increased. This resulted in more winter beef and mutton to feed England's expanding population.

From the mid-sixteenth century to the early eighteenth, England's economy experienced a significant reawakening. It was an era of improvement for agriculture, industry, trade, and commerce. Progress was brought about by the willingness of landowners and entrepreneurs to break with traditional practices and risk their time and fortunes for the sake of improvement. Heavy investments of capital were required in order to improve one's lands and reclaim valuable waste lands or to operate a mine or other metallurgical

operation. Clearly from the information presented above one can see that the desire to improve methods and techniques was evident by the mid-sixteenth century. After 1550 nearly every sector of the English economy was revitalized. Progress in most every area was slow since it was the work of individuals. John Norden called the agricultural improvers "the industrious people," and others have referred to them as "entrepreneurs." If their experimentation proved successful, others adopted similar methods, techniques and systems, and these new elements were gradually incorporated into the standard arrangement.

The stimuli for the transformation of England's economy were many. It is difficult to determine to what degree each individual factor accelerated this change. We have seen that many important elements came into play by the mid-sixteenth century which, when combined, were capable of redirecting the English economy. Of these the pressures of population expansion and rising prices were perhaps the most important. However, the dissolution of the monasteries and intercessory institutions must rank as one of the most important factors which changed the economic structure of England.

In reflecting on the dissolution, it seems impossible that such a deep-rooted institution as monasticism could have been destroyed completely in a brief four-year interval.

But as has been discovered, by the sixteenth century the role of the monasteries in England had changed greatly. During the Middle Ages the religious foundations were viewed as great repositories of church doctrine, intercession, learning, and hospitality. Seen in this light, it is logical that they would spread across the length and breadth of England and Wales. Pious benefactors endowed them with vast landed wealth which made them not only important religious institutions but also significant economic powers in England.

The great expansion of monasticism in England had occurred prior to the thirteenth century when England was largely an underpopulated and underdeveloped nation. Thus, the impact of the monasteries owning vast landed estates and controlling much of the agricultural life of the nation was not as significant as it would later become. However, the wealth derived from these lands became one of the chief corrupting elements which gradually destroyed the spirit of monasticism in England.

By the fourteenth century, the monks had retired from an active role in the management of their estates and by degrees cut themselves off from the lay community. Living the lives of inactive rentiers in luxurious splendor, they gradually abandoned their traditional duties and responsibilities. They neglected both sacramental devotions and social

works of charity. The established governing bodies of the church proved too weak to correct the abuses which had slowly become almost a part of monastic life.

By the fifteenth century the medieval world, in which monasticism was such an important element, was fading into history. In its place emerged a world more humanistic and worldly as things of the flesh superceded things of the spirit. In this world, money and property were the commanding elements of society from which social advancement was obtained. The English economic structure reflected this world view as population grew, centers of commerce expanded, and a renewed interest in agriculture and industry was felt across the nation. In this more modern world the monasteries were superfluous and in many ways a hinderance to further economic development.

As the once commanding position of the church began to decline, the monasteries became increasingly viewed as burdens on society. Between the fourteenth century and the dissolution, the monasteries were constantly criticized for being corrupt and riddled with abuses. Many of these same critics also gazed upon the monastic lands with covetous eyes. When the first attacks on the church were made by Henry VIII, most of English society avariciously awaited the spoils. Those who resisted the religious policies of the Tudor government did so largely to protest the economic

uncertainties of the dissolution. This was particularly noticeable in the north where the greatest challenge to Henry VIII's move against the church, the Pilgrimage of Grace, occurred.

The wealth of the dissolved monasteries did not remain long with Henry VIII. Rather it passed quickly to the countless Englishmen who purchased from the crown small parcels of ex-monastic lands or added more land to their existing holdings. It was with these country landowners that the dissolution had its greatest social and economic effect. The transfer of the monastic properties to the more ambitious and enterprising members of society, chiefly the gentry, stimulated existing industries, created new ones, and helped to initiate a revolution in agriculture. The fact that the expansion in these vital economic sectors occurred so quickly following the dissolution is more than a coincidence. It is evident that England was filled with a new economic spirit of inventiveness, enterprise, and determination. Combined with the natural mineral wealth of England, this spirit helped to lay the foundation upon which a stronger and more diversified economy could be built. Had the dissolution not occurred when it did, it seems likely that England would have continued to lag behind her continental neighbors in industry, trade, and agriculture.

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THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES:

AN ECONOMIC STUDY

by

John Clifford Solomon

(ABSTRACT)

The dissolution of the monasteries in England and Wales is too often viewed simply as a component of the English Reformation and little more. Its place in the Reformation is obvious, but its importance extends far beyond that fact. Unlike the other elements of the Reformation which transformed the traditional nature of the church in England and established a new confession of faith, the dissolution brought about a complete and far reaching alteration in the established social and economic structure of England.

The most prominent feature of the dissolution was the sudden transfer of the vast landed estates of the monks to the laity. In the sixteenth century land was still the paramount source of wealth and influence. Englishmen looked to the land not only for their food and drink, but also for their fuel and industrial materials. The dissolution occurred in a period of expanding trade and commerce, rising prices, and rapidly growing population. In the society of the sixteenth century, where the individual and economic concerns of England became increasingly important, the monasteries

as they were structured had no place. In many ways they were a major block to capitalistic development. When the monks were eliminated from the social structure and their landed wealth dispersed among the English people, the way was cleared for economic progress to begin.

The dissolution must be viewed against this wider background of England's economic transformation during the mid-sixteenth century and beyond. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the economic significance of the monasteries as well as the reasons for their dissolution, and to delineate the economic and social changes which occurred in English industry and agriculture after they disappeared from the scene.