be received by angels. She died at six o'clock on the morning of 17 November during the celebration of Mass.

Cardinal Pole received the news at Lambeth; he himself was close to death, as a consequence of the epidemic of fever, and it must be assumed that this further blow was enough to destroy him. He died twelve hours later, at seven o'clock in the evening. When the message of her sister's death reached Elizabeth she sank to her knees and called out '*O domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris*' – 'It is the work of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes'.

At eight o'clock, two hours after Mary's death, parliament was summoned with an announcement that Elizabeth was now 'queen of this realm'. The Commons answered with 'God save Queen Elizabeth, long may she reign over us'. The bells rang out and the bonfires blazed; tables were set outside the houses of the richer citizens, where ale and wine were distributed.

Yet some mourned Mary's passing. In his funeral sermon the bishop of Winchester praised the dead queen for her many virtues and her piety, mentioning the fact that her knees had hardened with her incessant kneeling. Yet the new queen was 'a lady of great virtue whom we are bound to obey, for you know, "a living dog is better than a dead lion"'. For that injudicious remark he was deprived of his see. Meanwhile the English court was buying up all the cloths of silk at Antwerp in readiness for the coronation.

# 26
# A virgin queen

Elizabeth began her progress to London in the last week of November, attended by a grand concourse of lords and ladies and gentlemen. A procession of bishops met her at Highgate and knelt in homage; she gave each one of them her hand to kiss, with the notable exception of Bishop Bonner. The reputation of 'Bloody Bonner' had preceded him. The queen had given an early sign of her true religious allegiances.

She remained at the Charterhouse for five days before taking formal possession of the Tower as the preliminary to her coronation. She rode in state along the streets of the city, where she was greeted by choirs of children and the salutations of scholars. As she entered the Tower itself she remarked to those standing about her that 'some have fallen from princes of this land to be prisoners in this place. I am raised from being prisoner in this place to be prince of this land.' It is reported that she went immediately to the apartment in which she had been confined, and fell to her knees in prayer.

The great scholar and magus John Dee was asked to cast a horoscope for the most propitious day of coronation. He hit upon Sunday 15 January 1559, and so the preceding day was chosen for her grand procession through the streets of London from the Tower towards Westminster. Accompanied by 1,000 horsemen she

was carried in an open litter covered with gold brocade; she wore a rich robe of state, made out of cloth of gold and lined with ermine.

It was a day of high ceremony in which the queen performed her part with great skill and relish. She waved at the spectators and called out greetings to them. 'God bless you, my people!' She raised her hands in surprise and delight; she listened with great seriousness as a child prattled a short oration, 'with a perpetual attentiveness in her face and a marvellous change of look, as if the child's words touched her person'. She accepted with grace the little nosegays and branches of rosemary that the poor women of London pressed upon her. Her expressions of joy and amusement were marked by everyone. 'God save you all!' 'I thank you with all my heart!' When passing through Cheapside she was observed to smile broadly. 'I have just overheard one say in the crowd,' she confided to an attendant, 'I remember old King Harry the eighth.' She had retained her father's ability to embody the national spirit. When an English Bible was lowered into her chariot on a silken string she received it with both her hands, kissed it and clasped it to her chest. 'I thank the city for this present, and esteem it above all others.' When prayers were said for the return of true religion she raised her eyes to heaven and cried 'Amen!'

Many pageants were set up on stages along her path. The allegory of Time and Truth had been erected at the Little Conduit in Cheapside. She asked for the identity of an old man holding a scythe and an hourglass, but of course she already knew the answer. 'Time,' she was told. 'Time!' she declared. 'And time has brought me here!' As she passed through Temple Bar, she called out to the populace 'Be ye well assured, I will stand your good queen.'

There was, however, a problem concerning the coronation. The archbishop of Canterbury was dead. The archbishop of York refused to crown her as supreme head of the Church, and the surviving Catholic bishops followed his example. The bishop of Carlisle was eventually persuaded to play the part at the abbey, however, on the understanding that the queen would take the ancient oath used by her Catholic predecessors. The controversies in matters of faith were only just beginning.

Another obstacle could have been found. According to canon law Elizabeth was illegitimate and therefore barred from the throne.



The most considerable candidate for the throne therefore became Mary Stuart, the queen of the Scots, who was the great-granddaughter of Henry VII and who conveniently enough happened to be a Catholic. Mary was married to the dauphin of France, soon to become crowned as Francis II; it was at this time that the young couple began to quarter the English arms with those of France as a token of proprietorship. Elizabeth and Mary would ever after be engaged in a duel that would end in death.

On the day of Elizabeth's coronation she made the journey from Westminster Hall to the abbey on foot. She trod upon a rich crimson carpet and, as soon as she had passed, it was cut away by the spectators. Her hair hung loose as a token of her virginity. As she arrived at the portals of the church all the bells of London rang out in unison. When the members of the congregation were asked if they wished Elizabeth to be their queen, they cried out 'Yes!' Then the organs and the fifes, the drums and the trumpets, resounded. The coronation banquet in Westminster Hall began at three o'clock in the afternoon and ended at one o'clock of the following morning.

She had met her privy council at Hatfield even before her entry into London. Twenty-nine of Mary's appointed men soon withdrew or were asked to resign; only six powerful nobles remained at the table, among them the earls of Arundel and Bedford, together with certain bureaucrats whose experience was invaluable. The clerics and the Catholics had gone. The members of the council represented a lay body, drawn from the nobility and from the elite trained at Cambridge and the Inns of Court; they were also largely interrelated and, at a slightly later date, eighteen out of twenty-five were related to each other and to Elizabeth herself.

One of her most important appointments was that of Robert Dudley, later earl of Leicester, as her master of the horse. He came from a great, if tainted, family. He was the son of the duke of Northumberland, who had tried to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, and became a childhood friend of Elizabeth at the age of seven or eight; they may subsequently have met in the Tower, where both were for a while incarcerated. 'I only show him favour,' she is reported to have said, 'because of his goodness to me when I was in trouble during the reign of my sister.' In any event they

established an enduring and affectionate relationship that subsequently became the source of much scandal.

The women about the queen were her distant relatives from suitably noble families. She was always accompanied by seven ladies of the bedchamber and by six maids of honour, all of them dressed in black or white or a medley of the two. She did not wish any of her attendants to mar the effect of her brightly coloured gowns. Strict rules were imposed upon them. They were never to speak to her about affairs of state and they were never, ever, to be betrothed or to marry without her permission. Some of them were consigned to prison for their disobedience in the matter. She herself naturally stood out. She had a somewhat swarthy complexion, like that of her mother, but she plastered her face with egg-white, alum and other agents so that it attained in time a luminous whiteness; she had a face considered too long to be entirely beautiful, but her eyes were large and expressive. She had the reddish-golden hair of her father, and the high cheek-bones of her mother. Her nose was slightly hooked, lending her an eagle-like appearance.

She had appointed Sir William Cecil as her principal secretary of state, telling him that 'without respect to my private will, you will give me that council which you think best'. On that account she was not to be disappointed. Cecil remained by her side until the end of his life. She called him her 'spirit' and addressed him as 'Sir Spirit'. He had first served in the reign of Edward VI and had managed to retain the favour even of Mary as the most able and industrious administrator of the day. It was his habit to draw up elaborate analyses of a particular problem, with the arguments for and against a policy summarized in two columns. He favoured a middle course in affairs of state and religion, and in this respect he was closely attuned to the wishes of his mistress. The Elizabethan historian William Camden wrote that 'of all men of genius he was most a drudge; of all men of business the most a genius'. He was also, in every sense, a survivor.

He knew well enough that the problems and dangers facing the queen were severe. A former clerk of the council under Edward VI sent an address to the new council with his own summary of the nation's affairs. 'The queen poor; the realm exhausted; the nobility poor and decayed; good captains and soldiers wanting; the people



out of order; justice not executed; all things dear; excesses in meat, diet and apparel; divisions among ourselves; war with France; the French king bestriding the realm, having one foot in Calais and the other in Scotland; steadfast enemies, but no steadfast friends.'

That is why the new ministers about her urged for caution above all else – caution in religious policy and caution in foreign affairs. One of Cecil's aphorisms was to the effect that the realm gains more from one year of peace than from ten years of war. Elizabeth shared his belief, knowing well that war was an expense she could not afford; the treasury was bare. It was necessary to accept the loss of Calais, therefore, and come to peace with France. It was also wise to reach some agreement with Scotland for the safety of the northern border. Some said that there was not a wall in England strong enough to stand a cannon shot.

Yet in some matters she was quick. When the Fellows of King's College Cambridge wrote to her asking for advice on the election of a new provost, she replied with a name by return of post.

In the winter of 1558, even before Elizabeth's coronation, a paper was drawn up with the title 'Device for the Alteration of Religion'. It is likely to have been the work of William Cecil; he was himself a supporter of the reformed faith. In the document he urges a full restoration of the 'true religion' as it existed in the reign of Edward VI, with all the risks this 'alteration' implied. The pope would excommunicate the queen, and the French would be able to attack the English as heretics as well as enemies. The Catholic power of Scotland might also be levied against the realm. Internal rebels would be no less dangerous than external foes; the bishops, and many of the judges, would be against the change. A majority of the people might also become discontented and rebellious. Yet the cause of God had to be maintained. Only then would Elizabeth and her nation be secured and glorified. At the end of the year, in this spirit, it was proclaimed that the litany and the Lord's Prayer might be recited in English.

In practice the 'alteration' would prove difficult to implement. Parliament met eleven days after her coronation. When the royal procession entered Westminster Abbey, for the customary Mass before the parliamentary session, the queen was met by a group of monks bearing lighted candles. 'Away with these torches,' she

called out, 'we see very well.' In the succeeding sermon the preacher denounced monks in particular for their part in the Marian persecution of heretics, and he urged the queen not to countenance 'idolatry' in her country. It was also well understood that the service in the royal chapel was predominantly Protestant in spirit, doing away with the elevation of the host. She would never countenance the demands of Rome. How could Elizabeth have embraced a faith that had denounced her mother as a prostitute and herself as a bastard? And she abhorred the smell of incense.

She had no affection for theological niceties. Although she once stated that she had studied divinity from childhood, she believed that controversies over religion were 'as ropes of sand or sea-slime leading to the moon'. 'There is only one Jesus Christ,' she told the French ambassador, 'the rest is a dispute over trifles.' Her own religious opinions are difficult to discern; she had a liking for elaborate choral music and appreciated much of the ritual of the Roman communion; she called herself a Protestant, but kept a small crucifix in the royal chapel which the more radical members of the new faith deemed to be idolatry. She also had a strong dislike for married priests.

A succession of bills was passed in the early months of 1559. The religious laws of the time of Edward VI were reintroduced and the English service was resumed. Private bills were passed returning to lay owners certain lands that had been seized by the Marian bishops. The second Edwardian prayer book was once more deemed to be the key to public worship, but it was subtly altered to avoid offending Catholic sensibilities. A reference to the 'detestable enormities' of the pope was removed, for example, and the real presence of Christ in the sacrament was tacitly allowed. In practice the priest would be allowed to wear the same vestments, and stand in the same position, as he had in the previous reign. Elizabeth was content to style herself 'supreme governor' rather than 'supreme head' of the Church in England. Christ was the head.

The Elizabethan 'settlement', as it later became known, was designed to pursue a middle course. Yet it was by no means wholly popular. The Catholic bishops in the Lords were opposed to the measures and eventually the Act of Uniformity, designed to reinforce the Book of Common Prayer, was passed by only three votes. A debate between Catholics and Protestants in Westminster Hall settled nothing. One of the disputants was described as 'turning himself towards all quarters, and into every possible attitude, stamping with his feet, throwing his arms, bending his sides, snapping his fingers, alternately elevating and depressing his eyebrows'. After the debate Elizabeth was obliged to imprison two Catholic bishops, in order to prevent them from excommunicating her in public. This was also a means of diminishing the opposition to her proposals in the Lords. The Commons were committed to the measures, but many of the Lords were defiantly hostile. In the end it was a close-run thing.



The queen wished to calm any form of disputation; she set herself the task of creating a broad consensus with which both the reformers and the orthodox could live in peace. The settlement, if such it was, did not in fact please either party. The Catholics lamented the reversal of Mary's policies, while the reformers were inclined to believe that the English Church was still papistical. A Puritan broadside described the Book of Common Prayer as 'an unperfect book, culled and picked out of that popish dunghill, the Mass book full of all abominations'. This was in fact a mixed religious polity that relied upon compromise and accommodation. The constitution of the Church remained largely unchanged while the liturgy contained ancient, medieval, Lutheran and Calvinist aspects; it was Protestant in regard to preaching but Catholic in its attention to ritual. It was perhaps the least reformed of all the reformed faiths and promulgated no uniform theology. This ramshackle contraption was designed to hold as many passengers as before. So Elizabeth had remained cautious. Towards the end of her reign Francis Bacon, the philosopher and statesman, declared that she had no wish to peer into any subject's soul. She required only outward conformity to the English Church for the sake of order. All the English were obliged to attend their parish churches every Sunday and holy day; the fine for absence was one shilling. The nation had changed its faith four times in twenty years, and the time had come for an end to innovation.

She never allowed anyone to meddle with the order she had established and, with a brief period of interregnum in the

seventeenth century, it has remained largely unchanged ever since. One of her advisers remarked that she had 'placed her Reformation as upon a sure stone to remain constant'. It was a very English settlement; it was practical rather than speculative; it brought together materials that might otherwise have been considered incompatible; it introduced compromise and toleration as well as a fair amount of ambiguity. Its very lack of clarity saved it. In London the reformers preached predestination and justification by faith alone while in York the faithful prayed still on their strings of beads. 'The difference between Catholics and Lutherans', the queen told the Spanish ambassador, 'is not of much importance in substance.' She required only a settlement that would maintain order and would bring unity to her subjects. More politic reasons for her caution can also be found. She did not wish to lose the support of the Lutheran princes in Germany, nor did she wish to antagonize the Catholic kings of Europe. The religion of the people had a significant foreign context.

Just before the end of the parliamentary session the Speaker of the House of Commons asked permission to present a petition to the queen that was of vital importance to the realm; it contained the wish, or entreaty, that she should marry and bear an heir to the throne. Only then could the peace and stability of the realm be maintained, and the throne itself protected from foreign enemies. She paused before making a long reply in which she expressed her wish to remain in 'this virgin's estate wherein you see me'. She alluded mysteriously to the danger that any issue might 'grow out of kind and become ungracious'. A male heir, in other words, might try to supplant her; this was always the danger for a female sovereign.

She then drew from her finger the coronation ring. She said that she had received the ring on the solemn condition that she was bound in marriage to the realm and would take no other as a partner. It would be quite sufficient if, on her tomb, were inscribed the words 'Here lieth Elizabeth, which reigned a virgin, and died a virgin'. In that supposition she was to prove correct. The experiences of her mother and of her sister would have warned her of the dangers of the married state, and it was suggested by one of her doctors that her body might not be able to withstand the strain of



childbirth. And of course, as she said, she may have feared a male heir. The Spanish king, Philip, her brother-in-law, had in fact proposed marriage to her already; the offer was for a while graciously evaded rather than denied. The direct refusal came later, when she declared that she could not marry him because she was a Protestant.

When parliament finally rose in the second week of May a Spanish bishop summarized the nature of the change. 'The Holy Sacrament was taken away yesterday from the royal chapel, and Mass was said in English. The bishops who will not swear [the oath of supremacy] will lose their sees; and when they have been deprived the queen will go on progress and institute their successors.' All except one were indeed deprived of their bishoprics and replaced with more convenient men. The monks and nuns had been scattered to the winds, and the statues of the Virgin and the saints were once more removed from their niches just as the crucifix was banished from the rood loft. The new liturgy was slowly, if grudgingly, accepted; yet within a generation it became the heart of English religion. The heretics of Mary's realm had been long since freed from their prison cells. Yet not all was peace and light. The people of the north did not care for the new Book of Common Prayer, and whispers of rebellion could once more be heard.

The queen herself had managed her parliament well. With the help of Cecil and other councillors she had successfully manoeuvred between the papists and the more radical clergy newly returned from exile under Mary. In a sense she had already become a symbol of the emerging nation. Her private experiences had directly reflected the travails of the nation. She had been in peril during the reign of Mary and Philip; she had suffered privation and had lived among manifest dangers. She had been a prisoner. Now she had triumphed.

She had gained her ascendancy despite her sex. At court she presided over a largely masculine community of some 1,500 persons, and she had to learn how to dominate her wholly male council. She was a natural diplomat, in turn serpentine and obstinate. She had no need for an army of translators since she herself spoke Latin, Italian, French, Spanish and German. Her intelligence and her quick wit were invaluable; her wilfulness and imperiousness also assisted her in the never-ending battle with the world. The

Spanish envoy remarked that she was infinitely more feared than her sister, and gave her orders with as much authority as her father. She once said that she had a great desire 'to do some act that would make her fame spread abroad in her lifetime and, after, occasion memorial for ever'. No specific act was necessary. It was enough, and more than enough, to be herself.

We may trace from this date, in fact, the beginning of the cult of Elizabeth. She would eventually be hailed as Deborah of fiery spirit from the book of Judges; she was Judith and she was Hester. She was Gloriana and Pandora. She was Astraea, the Greek virgin-goddess of justice who had in the age of gold dwelt among mortals upon the earth; Astraea retired into the sky as the constellation Virgo. The days of the queen's birthday and accession were treated as national celebrations marked by parades and banquets and music.

Many signs of providence could be found in her destiny. Her birthday, 7 September, was also the feast day of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. On that day her champion at the tilt, Henry Lee, erected a pavilion 'like unto a church, wherein were many lamps burning'. The paintings and miniatures and woodcuts portrayed her as an allegorical figure in circumstances of glory. Whether the people of England were wholly dazzled and deceived by these fabrications is another matter. Deep reserves of apathy, and even of cynicism, must have resisted many of the blandishments. It is impossible to gauge the sensibilities and opinions of the English people in the middle of the sixteenth century, but no doubt they were as unruly and as disaffected as every other generation.

Yet Elizabeth came to be defined as the virgin queen (with connotations of another Virgin), whose motto was '*semper eadem*' or 'always the same'. That would in time become the truism, and perhaps the tragedy, of her reign.

# 27

# Two queens

In the summer of 1559 Elizabeth issued a series of injunctions in matters concerning religion. The liturgy was to be recited in English, and an English translation of the Bible be placed in every church. Images and monuments 'of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition' were to be removed from walls and windows, but the fabric of the church was to be repaired or restored. No more wholesale iconoclasm was permitted. The cult of the saints, and prayers for the dead, were abolished.

The processions of Rogationtide, when the people beat the bounds of their parish and invoked blessings on the fields and the folk, were still to be performed. The congregation was ordered to uncover and bow on the pronunciation of the name of Jesus, and to kneel during the reading of the litany. Clergy were to continue to wear their traditional habits, complete with square hats. Wafers, rather than portions of ordinary bread, were to be provided for the time of communion. 'Modest and distinct' songs were permitted. All opprobrious names, such as 'heretic' or 'papist', were forbidden. The injunctions were, in other words, an attempt to compose differences and to soften the acrimony and recrimination attendant on the further change in religion.

Yet the differences were evident at the consecration of the archbishop of Canterbury. Matthew Parker had not wanted to