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The Moral Development of Elizabeth Tudor: From Troubled Youth to Triumphant Monarch

A Thesis Presented to

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by

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The Moral Development of Elizabeth Tudor: From Troubled Youth to Triumphant Monarch

History remembers Elizabeth Tudor as one of England's most powerful and influential monarchs. She is known for bringing England into one of its most prosperous and culturally rich periods. Elizabeth is famous for being a unique ruler in many ways. She was a queen in her own right who never took a husband, she commanded one of the strongest navies in Europe, she brokered a religious settlement that cooled the fiery feud between Catholics and Protestants in England, and she did not name her successor until she was on her deathbed.

Elizabeth also did not have a typical royal upbringing. Her childhood and adolescence were fraught with trauma and heartbreak. Suspicion and uncertainty followed her for most of her growing years. Her relationship with her family was distant and strained for the majority of her childhood. She became the figurehead for rebellions and uprisings, often paying a high cost for treason she did not commit. The question of her legitimacy and therefore her claim to the throne waivered back and forth based on the whims of others. A general mistrust of the intentions of those around her developed early for Elizabeth and would stay with her for the rest of her life.

By the time Elizabeth took the throne in 1558 as Queen Elizabeth I, she had developed a strong sense of independence and self-reliance. She trusted few others, and rarely left important decisions to anyone but herself. Scholars have speculated for centuries over what made her so special, so revolutionary, and so willing to exist outside the expectations of her time and her advisors. While there has been much literature written on Elizabeth, only a small portion of it focuses the light mainly on her developmental years. The vast majority of sources focus on her time as queen. There are a few books that are geared exclusively toward her childhood and adolescence. The most helpful and insightful are *The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth* by F. A. Mumbey, *The Young Elizabeth* by Allison Plowden, and *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne*

by David Starkey. Each of these works focuses the majority of its research and reflection on Elizabeth's life prior to becoming queen and the struggles she faced along the road to the crown. Her girlhood experiences are explored with typical historical detail, but little psychological analysis. This is the shortcoming of each source on Elizabeth's formative years. They each study the traumatic event itself, but none try to analyze these events in light of Elizabeth's policies as queen. There seems to be a "common sense" connection between her childhood and adulthood, but no solid lines have been drawn by historians to possible psychological explanations.

Similar conclusions are drawn with works regarding Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg. There are numerous books about these psychologists and their particular philosophies, including the primary material written by the men themselves. However, the problem arises when trying to find something that connects their work to the development of particular persons. Their philosophies seem to be relegated to the theoretical realm only, with little solid connections being drawn to influential people in real life, people who are in the limelight and whose actions should be studied most carefully.

This paper seeks new territory by answering that question of Elizabeth's uniqueness with a psychological and developmental look into specific traumatic events in her growing years. Through the theories of noted developmental psychologists Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg, some of Elizabeth's adult decisions seek to be explained by the ordeals she experienced in her most formative times of life.

Four specific events will be examined in depth: the execution of Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, when she was three years old; the sexual awakening she experienced with Thomas Seymour at age 14 and the ensuing scandal; the arrest of her closest confidante Kat Ashley when Elizabeth was 16 and again at age 21; and her alleged involvement in Wyatt's Rebellion and

subsequent imprisonment at age 21. Other formative childhood memories may accompany these specific events. Each event will be examined in detail, followed by a look at the practical implications of each event on her life. Then each event will be connected to a specific developmental stage from the theory of either Erikson or Kohlberg and the impact of that stage studied. Finally, a connection will be made from that event/psychological impact to a specific decision or trend she made as queen.

The best place to start this examination is with a brief biographical history of Elizabeth herself and a deeper look into the lives and theories of Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg. Elizabeth Tudor was born on September 7, 1553, to King Henry Tudor VIII and Anne Boleyn. In 1536 after her mother's execution, Henry's remarriage to Jane Seymour, and the passing of the Act of Succession, Elizabeth was declared illegitimate and taken out of the line of succession. Her household, far removed from the king's court, was for all intents and purposes forgotten by the king and his councilors. She grew up with the highest priority being her education. Later in her teens, she was reunited with her father and her new step-mother, Catherine Parr. She spent the last years of her father's reign reinstated into the line of succession behind her half-brother Prince Edward (born of Jane Seymour) and her older half-sister Princess Mary (born of Henry's first wife Catherine of Aragon).

Upon Henry's death and Edward's ascension to the throne, Elizabeth went to live in the household of her step-mother Catherine Parr. She remained with Catherine until her own independent household was established. When Edward died and Mary became Queen, Elizabeth's life became more complicated and dangerous. Edward had shared Elizabeth's religious beliefs in the Reformed Protestant Church and had passed religious laws abolishing Catholicism completely in England. However, Mary was a staunch Catholic and reinstated the

practice in England, persecuting Protestants to a degree that earned her the nickname “Bloody Mary.” Elizabeth had to be much more careful about her choice of company and her behavior under the watchful eye of her sister and Mary’s advisors.

When Mary died in 1558, Elizabeth became Queen at the age of 25. Elizabeth’s time on the throne led England into one of its most prosperous eras. She built up the treasury, which had been nearly drained during the reigns of her brother and sister. Elizabeth strengthened the military, particularly the navy, into a force to be reckoned with on the European stage. In fact, in 1588 England’s navy engaged the infamous Spanish Armada and after a week long battle sent the Spanish back home in a full retreat.

Elizabeth was a patron of the arts and during her reign English drama flourished, launching the careers of men like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. In policy, Elizabeth more often than not walked a moderate road, striving to be more conciliatory than her father or her siblings. While her reign became markedly more complex and unpopular in her last years, her popularity with the English people remained consistently strong, with many cults springing up celebrating the “Virgin Queen.” Elizabeth remained in good health until 1602, when the successive deaths of many of her closest friends and advisors sent her into a deep depression. She became ill in March 1603 and never recovered. Elizabeth died on March 24, 1603, at Richmond Palace. While Elizabeth had not publically named her successor, she was rumored to have been in secret negotiations with James VI of Scotland. Her council had agreed to James’ claim to the throne and upon Elizabeth’s death he was proclaimed King of England. Elizabeth’s reign as England’s queen continues to be one of the longest and most eventful reigns in English history. The face of England changed dramatically during her time on the throne, and

her choice to remain unmarried set a new precedent for European royal succession. Her influence would continue to be felt long after her death.

When we can understand *what* people believe are right and wrong, *why* they believe that way, and *how* that influences their decisions in specific situations, we become less surprised by the things they do and can see why they live the way they do. Elizabeth Tudor's life will be examined through the lenses of noted developmental psychologists Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg. Before any specific examinations can place, one must first understand more about these extraordinary men and their remarkable theories of development. Understanding the theories in their entirety will make the specific developmental stages of Elizabeth's adolescent trauma easier to grasp. Each of these men has a specific theory of development that divides moral reasoning into certain stages. All of these stages are interconnected; they build upon each other. When one stage is disrupted, the others cannot fully form.

Lawrence Kohlberg

Lawrence Kohlberg was born in Bronxville, New York, on October 25, 1927. His first significant interaction with the question of morality came in 1945. He graduated from high school and signed up to go to Europe in order to fight for the Allies in World War II. The brutality of war immediately shook him, especially what he saw of the unspeakable treatment of the Jews. He became a volunteer on a boat secretly transporting Jewish refugees to Palestine. Upon returning to the United States he began his formal education and his study into the process by which people make moral decisions. Kohlberg was heavily influenced in his career by the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget. These men's work became the foundation for his own work into exploring moral development.¹

¹ Stonehouse, Catherine. "The Power of Kohlberg." In *Nurture that is Christian* by James Wilhoit. 61-74. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995. 61.

His earliest research consisted of a long term study of ninety-eight American and Canadian boys ages ten through sixteen. Kohlberg observed these boys over a span of thirty years. Every three years he would gather them together and interview them, asking several questions of different moral dilemmas and observing how their answers changed. This allowed him to track their moral development and draw more generalized conclusions. Kohlberg sought to answer two questions: what is right and wrong, and why do we think that way? This discussion was his way of proving moral development. Engaging in moral dilemma discussion and then answering both *what* to do and *why* do it are the tools for development.

To understand Kohlberg's theory, we must first understand some of the basic principles upon which he drew. He believed that truly objective research was impossible. All researchers are influenced by their philosophies. These moral philosophies should be scrutinized by the empirical findings of research, but since everyone approaches and interprets the findings based on their own inherent philosophy, this perfect cycle is not possible. The best solution, then, is to identify and admit our basic philosophical assumptions from the get-go and then be brutally honest in critiquing our assumptions with regard to the data we collect. Nevertheless, Kohlberg believed that the study of moral development must be guided by moral philosophy.

Kohlberg also built this theory on the foundation that the content and the structure of thinking are different. Content is *what* I believe to be right and wrong. Structure is *why* I believe. The structure of my moral judgment is *why* I believe X to be right and Y to be wrong. The content of what we believe may or may not change. With some people the content of their moral judgment never changes. It is the structure of our moral judgment that undergoes development. To use one of Kohlberg's examples:

Three men may say it is wrong to steal (content) but all give different reasons for their judgment (structure). One may say, 'Stealing is wrong because you'll get punished for doing that.' Another claims, 'Stealing is wrong because the law says so.' A third might say, 'I would not want someone to steal my things, and it is wrong for me to do to others what I would not want them to do to me.'²

Moral content is important, but knowing only the content is not enough if we want to understand the dynamics of morality.³ Kohlberg may not be the accepted expert on moral content, but he is regarded as an expert on moral structure. Kohlberg examines two particular structures at length: perspective-taking and justice operations. Perspective taking can be defined as the ability to put oneself in another person's situation. "Walk a mile in another's shoes" so to speak. On the other hand, justice operations are "the ways in which one understands equality, equity, and reciprocity or the give-and-take of a situation of moral conflict."⁴ A difference in these two structure components can lead to drastically different assessments of moral dilemmas and drastically different moral decisions.

Kohlberg's theory is based on three levels of moral development, evaluated by seven criteria or categories. The categories include the source of authority, definitions of right and wrong, personal intentions, definition of justice, the value of persons, the stimulus to right actions, and the ability to take another person's perspective. The three levels of moral reasoning development are level I or preconventional, level II or conventional, and level III or postconventional.

² Kuhmerker, Lisa. The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions. Birmingham: Religious Education Publications, 1991. 21.

³ Ibid. 25.

⁴ Stonehouse, 63.

The preconventional level, or level I is primarily defined as how we determine what is right and wrong. Children in level I of moral thinking evaluate right as what works out to their advantage or what adults command them to do. Wrong is whatever they get punished for or does not work out to their benefit. Because they build their understanding of right and wrong out of their own unique set of experiments, there is no universal standard for what every young child *should* think is right or wrong. Again, the content of children's moral decisions may be very different from child to child, but for the most part they have the same reasoning for their decisions: they want to avoid pain and enjoy pleasure.

Children at the preconventional level are concerned only with themselves; their view of the world is entirely egocentric. They cannot imagine the perspectives of others being any different from their own. Perception of this type leads to absolute faith in their own perspectives. The value that other people hold for those in the preconventional level is measured strictly in terms of self-fulfillment. A child values someone for what that person can do for him. Those in this level do recognize different degrees of right and wrong. However, these degrees are evaluated in terms of the physical consequences and the quantity of wrong done. Intentions are never an issue to be considered. Kohlberg gives this example:

The girl who broke ten cups hurrying to obey her mother is judged naughtier than the girl who broke two cups stealing cookies. Why? Because ten is more than two. One bright four-year-old, after further questioning changed his answer. 'The one who broke two,' he said, 'because she did two things.' The content of his answer changed, but not

the structure of his reasoning. His mind still focused on the quantity of wrong done: disobedience plus broken cups, as opposed to only broken cups.⁵

We see in Kohlberg's theory that one of the central issues is the developing concept of justice. In level I, justice is seen as whatever an adult commands because adults are the center of power in a child's world. Young children in this stage do not question the adults' use of this power as just or unjust. It is simply the way things are. However, as children develop, they place more and more importance on equality and fairness. This is why it is so important for everyone to have the same amount of everything in a child's eyes. As children experience more of their own society, they discover that there are external forces that can be useful in judging right and wrong. This moves them into level II.

Level II in Kohlberg's theory is the conventional level. During the early days of this level, young people no longer look only to the adults in their lives for the source of moral authority, but to anyone judged as "important persons." These persons become their role models and they strive to emulate them. Kohlberg also dubs this stage the "Good Boy- Nice Girl" stage.⁶ The young person wants to be good. They see right as what good people do, and wrong as what good people do not do. This emphasis on being seen as good leads them to a higher respect for the laws and rules of society. They value laws and rules as the tools for keeping order and stability. It is here that right becomes obeying the law and wrong becomes disobeying the law.

Young persons have moved beyond a purely egocentric view of the world to the ability to consider the perspectives of friends and family, those they share experiences with. Relationships become more important, and the effect their actions may have on their relationships becomes

⁵ Munsey, Brenda. Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg. Basic Issues in Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Education. Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1980. 64.

⁶ Stonehouse, 66.

another key component in determining right behavior. It is at this point in the level where an understanding of each person in one's social system, and what each person contributes to the system, are recognized and appreciated. Intentions behind actions also become an important consideration in this level. Young persons can now excuse wrong behavior more easily if they know the person meant well. Justice is now all encompassed in society. Societal rules define what is right and wrong. If we keep society's rules, then we are being just. Loyalty to the social order is a defining characteristic of those in level II.

Kohlberg's level III is the postconventional level. During this stage, people often struggle with the idea of purely keeping the law in every situation to ensure justice. Principles become more important; "As persons live by laws and wrestle with applying those laws in complex situations with conflicting interests, they realize specific laws are sometimes not enough to guide more decision-making. They discover that just laws are specific expressions of moral principles. An understanding of those basic principles is needed to resolve moral conflict."⁷

Because just laws are now judged by principles, level III persons can determine that unjust laws need to be changed. They learn to value the process by which laws are changed. Right and wrong are now defined as living out moral principles or not. As these persons develop, moral principles grow from being purely external or being internalized. These internalized principles of morality are the new source of moral authority, and these principles are the motivation for level III persons to act rightly. Moral action is now an issue of being true to themselves; they have no choice but to act rightly.

The value of other people for those living in level III is found purely in their existence. All human life is sacred and every person is respected as a person of worth. This is where we

⁷ Kohlberg, Lawrence. The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. 621.

find justice in level III, treating each person with equal respect and consideration. People highly developed in level III cultivate a special concern for the poor and powerless and often find themselves advocating on the behalf of those with little voice. Kohlberg believed that very few people actually reach this stage of development within level III; so much so that he speculated that this stage of development may be purely theoretical.⁸

Kohlberg describes his levels most broadly in terms of age. Normally, level I apply to children, level II to adolescents, and level III to adults. However, moving forward with age was not a guarantee to move forward in the stages/levels of moral development. Kohlberg does hold that living in each level lays the foundation for progression into the next level. The transition from one level of moral development to another is also covered extensively in the work of Erik Erikson.

Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson was born June 15, 1902, in Germany. Around age 25, his wandering ways seemed sated for the time, and he entered school to study art. After two years in school, he was offered a position teaching art at the Freud Psychoanalytical Society and began to study psychoanalysis, working closely with Freud's daughter, Anna Freud. He would say for his entire analytic career that Freud's work heavily influenced his own. As such, Erikson is often accused of having a male bias and not taking into account the specific and unique needs of the female moral reasoning. He finished his training in psychoanalysis at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute in 1933.

There are a few essential things to understand about Erikson's theory. Most important is this, "epigenesis (the plan of the human personality to give growth and direction to becoming)

⁸ Kohlberg, Lawrence. The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981. 311.

implies the growth toward a functioning whole. Each of the psychosocial crises the human encounters is not to be understood as an isolated event from the totality of the personality. Each crisis becomes incorporated into the human personality. The earlier crises become foundational for the later crises.”⁹

Erikson also believed two distinct things about every person’s moral and psychological development. First, interaction is key. The human experience is a direct result of the variety of factors and influences it has undergone. Erikson describes human interaction as the relationship between soma, psyche, and ethos. Soma refers to the body, all body types, sizes and abilities. Each of these factors influences what our future identity will be. Psyche is our sense of self, our own unique traits, hopes, and dreams that interact with our developing personality. Ethos is the cultural setting we find ourselves in. This setting can either support or hinder our personal development. All three factors work together, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in contradiction, to development our unique identity.¹⁰

The second key element is the fact that everyone *will* go through all eight stages of development. No one can be stuck in a particular stage because they are based on age. Therefore, it important factor becomes not *if* a person will experience each stage, but *how* they experience each stage. “Persons will encounter the stages as long as they live. The stages are building blocks. The earlier stages provide either strength or weakness for persons to negotiate later stages.”¹¹

As we will see by examining each of Erikson’s eight stages of development, each stage is described in bipolar terms. The crises are identified as X versus Y, some point of development

⁹ Steele, Les. “The Power of Erikson.” In *Nurture that is Christian* by James Wilhoit, 91-104. Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1995. 95.

¹⁰ Erikson, Erik. *The Life Cycle Completed, A Review*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982. 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 96.

constantly in tension. As Erikson describes, “the ideal resolution of each crisis is not a total victory for the positive pole; rather, it is in coming to a favorable ratio of each pole of the crisis. This implies that the positive element is primarily reached, yet some negative is maintained.”¹² Each of Erikson’s stages corresponds with a particular age and crisis.

Stage one is called the basic trust versus basic mistrust stage. This stage is experienced by infants. In this stage, the infant must discover and determine whether or not his basic environment is trustworthy. This is determined mostly by whether or not his needs are met, he senses loving caring individuals around him, and he is kept from harm. If these needs are all met, he will gain a general sense of basic trust. If his needs are not met, he senses hostility or resentment from those caring for him, and he is exposed to pain or danger, he will develop a basic sense of mistrust in his environment. During this stage, the infant is also learning about his own trustworthiness. Can he trust himself or not? If a sense of personal trustworthiness is developed, he will also develop build up a sense of hope about as well as general trust in the world.

The second stage of development is the autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage. This stage is experienced in early childhood. Here children are exploring the boundaries of their own autonomy. This manifests itself in things like children saying “no” or learning to be potty-trained. If they are encouraged and affirmed when expressing their autonomy, they will develop a healthy sense of independence. If their attempts at autonomy are discouraged, they may become shamed and develop a doubt in their own abilities.

Stage three is the initiative vs. guilt stage. Preschool children are the target group for this development stage. During this time, their circle of friends and acquaintances extends outside their immediate family. By widening their social circle, they start to try to both win friends and

¹² Ibid. 96.

plan activities to participate in with their friends. This requires initiative and a self motivation. Often too much initiative in a child makes him appear overly aggressive. If left unchecked, this aggressive initiative leads to guilt and an inability to control his own limits. A child that is balanced by having someone check his initiative from time to time will develop a sense of purpose and a will to continue being self-motivated.

The fourth stage Erikson describes is the industry vs. inferiority stage. When children become the appropriate age for school is often when they enter this stage of development. The central crisis to stage four is the desire to develop skills and to feel useful, competent, and valued. Children also feel a need to master facts and skills, hence its appearance around the same time as beginning formal education. If they are encouraged and assisted in mastering these skills, they will build up a sense of competency and self-esteem (industry). If they cannot gain a handle on skills and facts, and are not assisted in doing so, children often emerge with low self esteem and a real sense of inferiority and worthlessness.

Stage five is identified as the identity vs. role confusion stage. Most children experience this stage during early adolescence. During this time of life, adolescents are trying to discover a sense of self and come to terms with their personal identity. They are searching for an answer to the question "who am I." If answered properly, they are instilled with a faith in life and a sense of grander purpose. If they cannot come up with an appropriate answer, they become confused about their role in the world and are unable to commit to a specific identity.

Erikson calls stage six the intimacy vs. isolation stage. Young adults usually experience this stage. It is during this time that individuals are learning to develop loving, intimate relationships with others. If they are confident in their personal identity (stage five) they will be able to form intimate and serious relationships. This helps them understand and experience the

strength of love. Identity confusion (stage five) results in an ability to be intimate with others and causes the young adult to instead form superficial relationships while experiencing overall isolation.

The seventh stage is referred to as the generativity vs. stagnation stage. This is most often experienced during mid adulthood. The most pertinent question at this stage is “can I generate something from myself to contribute to the rest of the world?” This contribution may include things like ideas that improve some aspect of life or the creation of children to benefit the world. If a person feels like they have something positive to offer the world, usually useful contributions to future generations will result. If the person does not feel they have anything useful to offer the world stagnation occurs. The denial of giving oneself in a significant way to the future results in self-absorption and the adult can become a very selfish individual.

The eighth and final stage is the ego integrity vs. despair stage. This stage is experienced by older adults nearing the end of their lives. Central to this stage is the question “can I make sense of my entire life? Do I possess a sense of wholeness and contentment with the life I have led?” If the person can reflect on his life and make sense of it, the good and the bad, then they develop a sense of peaceful integrity regarding their own experiences and contributions. They may also have renewed hope in what they are leaving behind. If the person cannot reflect on their lives with a sense of contentment and integrity they often become bitter. Bitterness is applied to both the past life they have led and any prospects for their future life. This bitter person may actually come to dread the remaining time they have, regarding it as useless.

As we can see, Erikson’s stages of development center on a particular issue or question. If the question is answered and developed properly, then growth occurs. This growth allows for the maturation of moral reasoning and makes the subject more likely to make morally acceptable

decisions. If the question is not answered properly or development is discouraged for any reason, then healthy moral development does not occur and a perversion of moral reasoning may result in immoral decisions or a warped sense of morality. Central to Erikson's argument of stages is his belief that religious life and psychosocial development influence each other. As previously stated, Erikson truly believed that while these stages may help answer the question of *what* is moral, religion is needed to answer the question of *why* we should strive for morality.¹³ The development of proper moral reasoning is useless without understand and agreeing that we *should* act morally.

With this basic understanding of the theories of Kohlberg and Erikson, the traumas of Elizabeth's childhood and adolescence can be examined through the lens of these stages and perhaps some explanation given for her unique and revolutionary decisions as Queen Elizabeth I of England.

¹³ Wright, J. Eugene. Erikson: Identity & Religion. New York: The Seabury Press, 1982. 150.

Chapter 1: The loss of a mother

During Elizabeth's lifetime, the future of a nation could be summed up in the words of the Spanish ambassador to England, "the entire future turns on the accouchement of the queen."¹⁴ As British historian David Starkey eloquently puts it, "Elizabeth's career was to mount a magnificent challenge to this received wisdom; her mother's, on the other hand, was to be an awful example of its truth."¹⁵ The story of Elizabeth's parents' romance is legendary. Henry VIII, upon becoming king, married his brother's widow, Princess Catherine of Aragon. Queen Catherine was unable to give birth to a live son. Of her many pregnancies, only one child survived: Princess Mary. Henry grew more and more uneasy about not having a male heir. After nearly 25 years of marriage and no male heirs, Henry fell in love with the captivating and seductive Anne Boleyn.

Anne's family was modest courtiers, not of overtly high stature at court. Anne's sister Mary had been Henry's mistress previously. Anne had spent time at the French court where she learned the art of seduction and mystery. Anne refused to be another one of Henry's mistresses and refused to sleep with him until they were married. Getting Anne to submit to his lusts became an obsession for the King. He petitioned the Pope for a divorce from Catherine, claiming that their marriage was illegitimate because Catherine had been married to his brother Arthur. In Henry's mind, the words of Leviticus rang loudly, "In Leviticus, God had threatened childlessness as the punishment for any that should transgress the law and marry his brother's widow. Henry interpreted this failure to have a son as the equivalent to childlessness. Therefore

¹⁴ Renard to Charles V, 27 June 1555. Cited in J.A. Froude, *The Reign of Mary Tudor*. London, 1910, 214.

¹⁵ Starkey, David. *Elizabeth; The Struggle for the Throne*. New York. Harper Perennial, 2000. 3.

by extension, he reasoned, both he and his marriage were accursed.”¹⁶ However, Catherine’s nephew was the powerful Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. Charles had, in the same year Henry started his love affair with Anne, captured the Pope and established a Habsburg rule over Italy. Under pressure from Charles, the Pope refused to grant Henry his divorce.

The King’s Great Matter

Growing more desperate, Henry turned England upside down in order to marry Anne, culminating in a break from the Catholic Church and the establishment of Henry as Supreme Head of the Church of England. Henry reasoned that the monarchy was not subject to the church, but rather the church was subject to the will of the King. This premise led him to conclude that the leader of the national church and the nation itself should be the same person. Thus he made himself Supreme Head of the Church of England. After establishing his new Church and abolishing the power of the Pope in England, Henry put together a committee to “investigate” the legality and legitimacy of his marriage to Catherine. In other words, he chose people to rule in his favor.

Under these new religious circumstances, Henry was granted his divorce from Catherine and married Anne. Expectations were high that the new young Queen would produce the longed for prince, but much to her parents’ disappointment, Anne’s child was a girl. Starkey describes Elizabeth’s birth as “an easy birth: mother and daughter were well and the child took after her father with his fair skin and long nose. But she had her mother’s coal-black eyes.”¹⁷ While Henry saw Elizabeth’s femininity as a failure, Anne could not have been more proud of her tiny daughter; “Until Anne had a son, Elizabeth was the prime symbol of Anne’s marriage- and the

¹⁶ Starkey, 11.

¹⁷ Starkey, 1.

child's position, honour, and dignity were the guarantee of her own."¹⁸ "Anne would continue over the next three years to try and produce a son for Henry, but her failure would eventually cause Henry's eye to wander again. The Queen was known for a short temper and a shrill nature, and her constant nagging and tantrums grated against Henry's nerves and pushed him farther away and into the arms of other women. Additionally, Henry was again growing desperate for a son. Anne's demise came amidst rumors of infidelity with several members of court, including her own brother. Under torture, two of Anne's supposed suitors, Mark Smeaton and Henry Norris, both admitted to adultery with the queen. It is likely that neither of these men actually had affairs with Anne, but Lord Cromwell (one of Anne's harshest critics) had the admission he needed to bring down the queen.¹⁹ She was convicted of treason and sentenced to beheading. Anne was executed on May 19, 1536. Anne was beheaded in the French style: kneeling upright with a sword, rather than lying on the block with an axe.

A popular story circulates that before her execution, Anne made a final plea to Henry using Elizabeth as a reminder of their love and marriage. She is said to have beckoned to Henry from a courtyard, holding Elizabeth out toward him while he watched from a window above. Historians question the validity of this story, citing Elizabeth's household records stating that she was not at the palace during the time of her mother's execution. The point, however, is not whether this particular event took place. The larger picture centers on the idea that Henry was so obsessed with a male heir that he disregarded (again!) the mother of his child in his quest for a son. No thought was given to how the execution of her mother might affect Elizabeth.

The death of her mother proved to be a terrible blow for Elizabeth, not to mention father's role in it. It is difficult to determine exactly the extent of the trauma on Elizabeth herself.

¹⁸ Starkey, David. *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII*. New York. Harper Collins Publishers, 2003. 511.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 569.

First of all, she was only three years old at the time of Anne's execution. Second, in the tradition of royal children, Elizabeth spent relatively little time directly with her parents. In December of 1555, just 3 months after her birth, Elizabeth's independent household was set up at Hatfield, twenty miles north of London. She was brought up by a series of nurses and ladies in waiting. In fact, she is quoted as saying, "we are more bound to them that bringeth us up well than to our parents, for our parents do that which is natural for them- that is bringeth us into this world- but our bringers up are a cause to make us live well in it."²⁰ Finally, Elizabeth never spoke or wrote a single word regarding her mother's death. In fact, she is not known to have ever even mentioned her mother's name.

However, the practical implications of her mother's death would be felt immediately and severely. As Elizabeth was a reminder of a shrew of a wife, Henry rarely invited her back to court. She was separated from everything that went on at court and was all but forgotten by her powerful father. Elizabeth had been lavishly clothed and showered with gifts by her mother. When Anne was executed, the clothes stopped coming, along with any other major supplies to Elizabeth's household. She was already a precocious three year old, and she immediately noticed the lack of pretty clothes coming to her. Not to mention that she was quickly outgrowing all her clothes. Within a few weeks of Anne's execution, Elizabeth had literally nothing to wear. Her head of household, Lady Margaret Bryan, put it thus in a letter to Thomas Cromwell: "beseeching you to be a good lord to my lady, and to all hers; that she may have some raiment; for she hath neither gown, nor kirtle, nor petticoat, nor no manner of linen nor smocks..."²¹ How it must have affected an alert three year old to go from a closet full of beautiful clothes to

²⁰ *State papers Henry VIII I*, 414-415.

²¹ Henry VIII: August 1536, 1-5, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 11*.

nothing that fit. Could this be why the adult queen Elizabeth would fill her wardrobe overflowing with hundreds of dresses?

Elizabeth's primary caretaker at this time was Lady Margaret Bryan, her Lady Mistress. Lady Bryan had fulfilled the same role for Elizabeth's half-sister Mary. Lady Bryan wrote a lengthy letter a few weeks after Anne's execution to Thomas Cromwell, the royal Secretary. In the letter, she forcibly made the point that the princess needed clothes and other childhood necessities. She also inquired from Cromwell as to how Elizabeth was to be treated now that her mother had fallen into deep disfavor with the King prior to her death. Was Elizabeth still to be treated as the heir to the throne? Or was Henry's neglect of his daughter in light of his marriage to his new wife Jane to mean that Elizabeth was also in disfavor with her royal father?

Elizabeth faced a hostile situation from many in her household from her earliest days. Many of her attendants had been loyal to Catherine and Mary and were now being forced to serve the daughter of the woman who had usurped the rightful queen and forced the rightful princess into the shadows. Catholic loyalty and love for Mary were still strong in England, and Elizabeth must have sensed the hostility present within her own household. While the resentment cooled slightly after Anne's execution, Elizabeth would forever be considered a bastard by a significant portion of the English population.

Shortly after Henry's marriage to Jane Seymour, Jane gave birth to the long awaited for son. Edward's birth meant that Elizabeth was no longer the heir to the throne. The loss of her title and prestige was a blow that even a three or four year old noticed. Elizabeth, as an alarmingly perceptive toddler, asked, "How haps it, Governor, yesterday my Lady Princess, and to-day but my Lady Elizabeth?"²² Both Elizabeth and Mary were now removed from the line of succession in favor of their half-brother Edward and any of his heirs or future children from his

²² Jenkins, Elizabeth. *Elizabeth the Great*. London. Phoenix Press, 2000. 14.

mother Jane. Unfortunately Jane died just a few weeks after Edward was born. He was then sent to be brought up in his sisters' household and Elizabeth's Lady Mistress Bryan was put in charge of Edward. It was at this time that Elizabeth met the woman who would grow to be the closest thing to a mother she would ever know, Katherine Champernon (later Ashley).

Lasting Effects On a Child's Mind

It is clear that the death of Elizabeth's mother had lasting repercussions for her upbringing. How would an event like this affect a sensitive and discerning three year old? Erikson gives the answer with his stages of moral development. Anne's death took place during the time Elizabeth was in stage one of development: trust vs. mistrust. To review, in this stage, the child must discover and determine whether or not his basic environment is trustworthy. This is determined mostly by whether or not his needs are met, he senses loving caring individuals around him, and he is kept from harm. If these needs are all met, he will gain a general sense of basic trust. If his needs are not met, he senses hostility or resentment from those caring for him, and he is exposed to pain or danger, he will develop a basic sense of mistrust in his environment.²³

On the most basic setting, here is where Elizabeth learned not to trust anyone but herself. Her most basic needs were not being met in the manner to which she had grown accustomed. She was without proper clothes and household furnishings. The attendants of her house, particularly the one who cared for her directly changed at a tender age, and her household moved from location to location based on where Henry himself wanted to be. She sensed the resentment coming from Mary and Mary's supporters within her own house. Was this a safe and secure environment for a toddler to grow up? These factors contributed to the development of a general feeling of mistrust in her environment and a questionable trust in herself. Elizabeth was not

²³ Erikson, Erik. The Life Cycle Completed, A Review. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982.

nurtured in a healthy way at this stage of life and it would affect the decisions she would make as queen.

Elizabeth as Queen

The seeds of mistrust that were sown here plagued Elizabeth for the rest of her life. She could never trust that others had her best interest at heart. She learned not to trust anybody but herself to truly care about her wellbeing. As an adult she rarely left important political decisions to her advisors. She vowed from the beginning to always listen to the opinions of everyone and make the most informed decisions possible, but the final decision was always solely in her hands. This was particularly true when it came to the issue of her marriage as an adult.

In her lifetime, marriage meant the complete surrender of power and authority to one's husband. A woman was on the most basic level considered the property of her husband. He made all the decisions for the family and the wife's place was to be silent and submissive. This was even more the case in the royal family. A princess was most often a bargaining tool to broker political alliances. The husband she took became more important than anything she had to offer on her own. Elizabeth knew that she would lose all authority over her life and her country the moment she took a husband. Since Elizabeth was not nurtured to trust others and their concern for her safety and prosperity, she knew that she had to take care of herself. That meant retaining control over her person and her country. The only way to do that was to remain single. One of her most famous lines was thus: "I shall have one mistress in this house, and no master!"²⁴ In fact, she went on to say that "I am already bound unto a husband, which is the Kingdom of England...if a marble stone should hereafter declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin."²⁵ Clearly, Elizabeth not only had little faith in the goodwill of others to

²⁴ Neale, J.E. *Queen Elizabeth*. New York. Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934. 77.

²⁵ Jenkins, 76.

choose a husband for her, but she feared what marriage might mean for her, both personally and politically. Instead, she trusted her gut and married herself to her people and her kingdom. In one of her earliest speeches to the Council regarding the question of her marriage, she said:

I will never in that matter conclude anything that shall be prejudicial to the realm, for the weal, good, and safety whereof I will never shame to spend my life. And whomsoever my chance shall be to light upon, I trust he shall be as careful for the realm and you- I will not say, as myself, because I cannot so certainly determine of any other- but at the leastways, by my goodwill and desire, he shall be such as shall be as careful for the preservation of the realm and you as myself.²⁶

Clearly Elizabeth not only put her first concern as the welfare of her people, but she left herself an everlasting excuse. By making it clear that she would only marry someone who had the same level of regard for the people as she did, she could continuously deny suitors with little fear of reprehension. After all, who could fault her for putting the wellbeing of her people before her own happiness?

²⁶ British Library, MS Landowne 94, art. 14, fol. 29.

Chapter 2: Awakening

Elizabeth was eventually reconciled to her father and for the last few years of his reign, lived in relative harmony with her family and her situation. She was restored to the succession, following Henry's new son Edward and her sister Mary. It seemed as though she had finally found some peace. Although she had little prospects of ever becoming Queen, she was recognized once again as a legitimate heir and welcomed back into the royal court. However, all that would change when England lost its giant. Once more Elizabeth would be plunged into the center of trauma and controversy.

Henry VIII died on January 29, 1547, and his nine year old son Edward succeeded him as King. Following the death of Henry VIII and the ascension of Edward VI as King, all of the Tudor women found themselves in different situations. Mary was set up with her own independent household again and was to face horrible persecution as Edward's militant Protestant regime went head to head with her stubborn faithfulness to Catholicism. Henry's sixth and final wife, Catherine Parr, had managed to outlive Henry and now found herself Queen Dowager as her step-son took the throne. This meant that she was free to live in her own independent household and for the first time, marry based on her choice. Her choice was Thomas Seymour, brother to the Lord Protectorate Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset. Somerset had been put in charge of the young king's financial affairs and his personal management until he became old enough to take control on his own.

Catherine and Thomas had a relationship prior to her marriage to Henry. Although she most likely was still in love with him at the time of her marriage, when the King proposed marriage, one did not say no. Thomas was a charming albeit power hungry man who resented the fact that his brother had been put in charge of the young king. He felt that as he and his brother

were both the young king's uncles, they should share charge of the boy. That also meant sharing charge of the King's purse and influencing his decisions. Once it became clear that Thomas would be allowed nowhere near Edward, he devised a plan to put himself back in a position of influence. He married Henry's widow, perhaps thinking that gaining control over the Queen Dowager would give him power to match his brother's. Elizabeth, who had a close relationship with her step-mother and a shared devotion to the Reformed Protestant Faith, was invited to join Catherine and Thomas's household at Chelsea.

The move made much sense. Elizabeth was still too young to live by herself, and she and Catherine had lived together before during Henry's absences during wartime in Europe. They shared a similar love for reading, learning, and the Protestant religion. Catherine, in the last days of Henry's life, had taken control over Elizabeth's education, ensuring she was taught by the very best tutors in Europe. As a result, Elizabeth was more than a precious teenager. In turn, Elizabeth had been guiding Catherine in studying and exploring the Reformed Protestant faith. Elizabeth had been a follower from a very young age, and Catherine, eager to learn more, looked to her step-daughter for direction and discussion. Seymour now had a powerful hand under his roof. Elizabeth was Edward's favorite sister and the heir to the Protestant crowd's affections. If Seymour could not control the King, he could at least have his eye on the King's older sister and perhaps gain power that way. He may have also felt that Elizabeth's affections, both to and from the King, would help him gain sway. If he could persuade Elizabeth to take his cases to Edward, there was a good chance his requests would be granted; or so he believed.

Elizabeth loved Catherine very much and was more than pleased to join her house. From the beginning, Seymour exhibited an unhealthy interest in Elizabeth. Most of the time, it was written off as a Lord's concern for the wellbeing of the King's sister, or even a fatherly love for a

daughter figure, but that was not the case. Thomas Seymour, nearing age 40, still possessed a striking appeal. He is described as “tall, well-built, and with a dashing beard and auburn hair, he was irresistible to women...they gladly gave up religion, learning and prudence at his beck and call.”²⁷ He was also insatiably ambitious. His first idea to gain power in the royal family was to marry either Mary or Elizabeth. Unfortunately for him, Henry’s will decreed that the council had to give its consent to any husband of the princesses and the council would never have agreed to the marriage. Seymour, then, turned to the next best thing: the King’s widow. He was now Elizabeth’s step-father and the leader of the house in which he lived.

Elizabeth’s New Family

Elizabeth was 14 years old when she moved into Catherine’s house and had grown into a lovely teenage girl. She was attractive and youthful, incredibly intelligent and alert, and joyful and accomplished in all the things a young lady of the 16th century was expected to do. She had excellent mastery of languages, music, art, penmanship, dance, sewing, and all the other areas which a true lady was to excel. Seymour gave Elizabeth particular attention and flattery. Elizabeth, perhaps because she grew up so uncertain of her place, thrived on attention and continued to seek flattery from her courtiers into adulthood. Seymour’s attentions and his youthful good looks made Elizabeth fall heavily for him. At this point in her psychological development, her main concern was herself. Elizabeth’s worldview was still fairly egocentric. While she cared very much and very deeply for those around her, her own personal interests and desires still took priority in her mind. Her crush left her vulnerable to Seymour’s advances. Seymour took advantage of Elizabeth’s affections and, with Catherine’s approval and occasional participation, would begin a string of inappropriate behaviors that would cause a scandal for everyone involved.

²⁷ Starkey, 66.

Early in the mornings, Seymour would come into Elizabeth's bedchamber, of which he had stolen an extra key. On the chance that Elizabeth was awake but not yet dressed, he would tell her good morning and "struck her on the back or buttocks familiarly."²⁸ If she happened to still be in bed, Seymour would pull back her bed curtains and "make as though he could come at her."²⁹ On these occasions, Elizabeth would often retreat farther back into her bed to get away from him. One specific account tells the story of Seymour entering Elizabeth's room wearing only his night-shirt and no trousers. There is no official account of Seymour and Elizabeth actually sleeping together, but he attempted nearly everything but. He would kiss Elizabeth and embrace her, many times under the gaze of his wife Catherine, even with her assistance. Early on two known mornings, for instance, Catherine and Seymour together entered Elizabeth's room and tickled her while she was still in bed. Later that same day, Catherine and Seymour cornered Elizabeth in the garden. Catherine held her still while Seymour took a dagger and cut Elizabeth's gown into a hundred pieces.³⁰ In her young mind, the fact that Catherine and Thomas seemed to see no harm in this behavior led to the conclusion that it was appropriate. Not to mention the fact that nobody was reproaching her for her own feelings.

Eventually, though, Catherine decided the behavior had gone too far and sent Elizabeth away to live with Sir Anthony Denny and his wife at Cheshunt. Before Elizabeth left Catherine's house, they had an interview together. Catherine warned Elizabeth of the dangers to her reputation based on her actions while Elizabeth said very little in her own defense. Elizabeth was not known to take criticisms quietly, so her silence could be interpreted as complicity in what had happened. However, in a letter written later to Catherine, Elizabeth explained that "albeit I answered little, I weighed it more deeper when you said you would warn me of all evilness that

²⁸ Haynes, S. *A Collection of State Papers Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*. London. 1740, 99.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 99.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 100.

you should hear of me; for if your Grace had not a good opinion of me, you would not have offered friendship to me that way at all..."³¹ Elizabeth's focus was still on the opinion that others held of her. Despite having experienced her own physical and psychological trauma, her main concern still lay in her reputation and her relationship with those she held most dear. This shows the journey she was making toward maturity and the next level of psychological and moral development.

Interpreting the Signs

These actions can be interpreted several different ways. It is interesting to think how a current board of social workers and pediatricians would see these behaviors as possible instances of child abuse. What is clear, however, is that Elizabeth had experienced an awakening to her burgeoning sexuality. She knew that Seymour was behaving inappropriately, and she still found herself going along with his antics. She had tasted the forbidden fruit and found that she liked it. However, the subsequent scandal and banishment from her step-mother's household did elicit some feelings of regret. Not to mention the fact that as a 14 year old, she was much too young and underdeveloped physically, emotionally, or mentally to handle the sexual advances of a 40 year old man. Elizabeth would go on to have several medical problems that could possibly be traced back to time of pre-mature sexual awakening. In her adult years, she suffered from inconsistent menses, frequent bleeding, and painful stomach cramps. Due to her unpredictable menstrual cycle, it was believed that Elizabeth was unable to produce children. This seriously affected her eligibility as a potential wife.

In addition to the physical effects of the incidents, Elizabeth had taken a major hit to her respectability and reputation with those closest to her and with the general public. She had tried,

³¹ Letter to the Dowager Queen Catherine, in *Letters of Queen Elizabeth I* ed. G. B. Harrison. New York: Funk & Wanhalls, 1968. 7.

not necessarily well, to play the innocent victim of the actions of the adults around her. However, very few people were convinced that she did not return Seymour's affections. After all, she did not try too hard to conceal her feelings. On September 7, 1548, Catherine died a few weeks after giving birth to Seymour's daughter and Seymour once again open efforts to marry Elizabeth. Her liking for Seymour was obvious. When Thomas Parry, her chief accounting officer, asked her straight out if she would marry Seymour should the council approve, her response barely masked her true feelings, "When that comes to pass, I will do as God shall put in my mind."³² These answerless answers became Elizabeth's trademark diplomatic response later in life. But few people doubted how she really felt about Seymour, and most were not in favor of a marriage between the supposedly pure Elizabeth and a scoundrel like Seymour. However, Seymour's ambitions would prove to be dangerous to Elizabeth's future and fatal to his own future. His schemes to take over control of the King ended with his arrest and execution for treason in 1549. Elizabeth would narrowly escape prosecution for fraternizing with Seymour, but not without a cost to the loyalty and trust of her household.

How did this pre-mature sexual and emotional experience affect Elizabeth's adult life? According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, at this point Elizabeth was between the pre-conventional and conventional stages of development. In the pre-conventional stage children are concerned only with themselves; their view of the world is entirely egocentric. They cannot imagine the perspectives of others being any different from their own. Perception of this type leads to absolute faith in their own perspectives. Justice is seen as whatever an adult commands because adults are the center of power in a child's world. Someone in this stage decides an act is wrong if they are punished for it. If an adult commands it or if things work out to their

³² Strickland, Agnes. *Life of Queen Elizabeth I*. London: Hutchinson, 1906.30.

advantage, then it is right.³³ Young children in this stage do not question the adults' use of this power as just or unjust. It is simply the way things are.

Elizabeth was partly living under these criteria. Her view of the world was based entirely on herself and what those around her could do to benefit her. At the same time, she was struggling with the authority of the adults in her life. Elizabeth was not directly punished for these acts, so she came to the conclusion that they were appropriate. Since a lack of punishment corresponded with the fulfillment of her own desires, there could not possibly have been a problem. As she lived partly in level I, the will of the adults around her (particularly Catherine and Seymour) was not to be questioned. Adults knew what was right and wrong, so if her step-parents said something was ok, then it was; "Adults hold the power in a child's world, and they do not question the justice in the use of that power."³⁴ Most of the adults around her seemed to find no fault in these actions, although a few expressed concern. However, she was also beginning to move into stage II.

At stage II, or the conventional stage, young people no longer look only to the adults in their lives for the source of moral authority, but to anyone judged as "important persons."³⁵ The young person wants to be good. They see right as what good people do, and wrong as what good people do not do. This emphasis on being seen as good leads them to a higher respect for the laws and rules of society. They value laws and rules as the tools for keeping order and stability. It is here that right becomes obeying the law and wrong becomes disobeying the law. Relationships become more important, and the effect their actions may have on their relationships becomes another key component in determining right behavior. It is at this point in

³³ Stonehouse, Catherine. "The Power of Kohlberg." In *Nurture That is Christian; Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education*, by James C. and John M. Dettoni ed Hilhoit, 65. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.

³⁴ Ibid. 66.

³⁵ Kohlberg, L. *The philosophy of moral development: Moral stages and the idea of justice*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

the level where an understanding of each person in one's social system, and what each person contributes to the system, are recognized and appreciated. Intentions behind actions also become an important consideration in this level. Young persons can now excuse wrong behavior more easily if they know the person meant well.³⁶

As Elizabeth was entering this stage, she was beginning to question the absolute authority of the adults in her life. She wanted to be a good girl, and the negative reaction of so many people around her to Seymour's behavior led her to believe that it was not a "good" thing. She also saw the effect of her actions and Seymour's actions on Catherine, someone she truly cared about. This led her to believe that the actions were wrong. She tried to reconcile the apparent inappropriateness of Seymour's actions with his supposed intentions, which she believed were affection toward her. It is hard to imagine how torn she must have felt at this point. Since she was living between two levels of moral development, she was unable to make a firm judgment on the "rightness" or "wrongness" of these actions, both her own and Seymour's.

Elizabeth as Queen

This questioning of the source of moral authority and a conflicting sense of right and wrong would follow Elizabeth into adulthood. As an adult, she never came down clearly on the issue of who had the final word on moral questions. Whether the advice came from the church or her council, she often had the last word on the morality of her own decisions and the decisions of those around her. Since she had not been trained to recognize a specific source of authority of issues of right and wrong, she followed the advice of whichever side favored her wishes most closely.

³⁶ Kohlberg, L. *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984.

Along the same lines, the question of her sensuality and her feminine wiles became a tool to be used for her own ends. As her eyes had been opened so early to the world of sexuality and seduction, she used her eligibility as a single royal woman and her not-so-scanty allure to achieve her own political and social ends. Elizabeth manipulated the stage of marital availability to her advantage. As England grew stronger on the international stage, her hand in marriage became an ever more appealing commodity. Elizabeth was very aware of this development and dangled the possibility of marriage in front of many a suitor in order to gain some political end or avoid some military disaster. Just when the marriage proposal was getting to a serious stage, she would make some excuse and wiggle her way out of it, but not before she had already secured an agreement to achieve her ends. For example, when Elizabeth was 34, she entertained the proposals of the 19 year old Henri II, Duke of Anjou. This marriage would form an alliance between France and England, something that was profitable and helped avoid potentially deadly military conflict. Elizabeth's motives are questionable. She, most likely, never intended to go through with the marriage. However, to gain the good graces of the French, she allowed the marriage negotiations to go far enough to sign a treaty of mutual defense before she cut it off, citing irreconcilable differences in religion with the Catholic Henri.³⁷

She flirted with the men at court and reveled in their romantic attentions. She gave out favors and dealt harsh punishments to those who both built up her ego and spurned the queen for other women. Elizabeth also never saw a healthy picture of a loving romantic relationship. Therefore, her notions of affection and attention were skewed. She was obsessed with being loved. When a member of her court (particularly males who had bestowed attention and flattery upon her) began to show attention to another woman, Elizabeth became furious. She would often have the man banished and the woman punished. She did not know how to accept attention and

³⁷ Jones, Phillippa. *Elizabeth, Virgin Queen*. New York: Metro Books, 2011. 210.

gracefully lose attention. Not having a healthy and appropriate development of her sexual energy and learning from a young age about moral ambiguity led her to manipulate the affections of others to her own personal gain. While this proved to be a blessing for the nation (on most occasions), it was not healthy for Elizabeth personally and led to the alienation of scores of people from her graces and her confidence.

Chapter 3: Betrayal

The Seymour affair would prove to have lasting consequences for Elizabeth, lasting longer than Seymour's life. Thomas had woven an intricate web in his plans to gain control of Elizabeth and thereby Edward. His plans lured many of Elizabeth's closest friends and confidants into dangerous territory. They would all end up paying a price for their part in his plans. During his schemes to unite himself to Elizabeth, Seymour had enlisted the advice and help of her chief financial officer, Thomas Parry. When Parry had journeyed to London for business, Seymour had requested a meeting with him to discuss Elizabeth's lands and houses. Seymour inquired as to the state of her houses, where they were located, how much land came with each one. He asked as to how much each house was worth and the legal procedure for breaking them up or uniting them with other properties. Seymour, it seems, had great plans to unite them with his own and questioned Parry at length as to the state of Elizabeth's finances. Before his plans could go further, he needed to know that he would be gaining a significant amount, both in land and money, by marrying Elizabeth.

Also on the trip was Katherine Ashley, Elizabeth's Lady Mistress. Katherine, or Kat, was Elizabeth's closest friend. She wanted more than anything to see Elizabeth taken care of, considering the manner in which she had been treated following Anne Boleyn's death. Kat is said to have been "a well-meaning, affectionate, but not very sensible woman. She was devoted to her charge, but fascinated by Seymour's charm and friendliness. She talked of him often and was misguided enough to tell Elizabeth that it was she, and not [Catherine] upon whom his affections had been set when he married."³⁸

Parry and Ashley had long talks regarding Elizabeth's mind and her intentions should Seymour propose. Kat had endured a terrible meeting with the Lord Protector's wife where she

³⁸ Neale, J.E. *Queen Elizabeth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934. 21.

was berated for “having allowed Elizabeth to go with [Seymour] in a barge on the Thames one night...and for other light parts.”³⁹ Ashley and Parry, while wary of Seymour’s recent alleged activity outside the realm of council’s consent, both were in favor of a match between Elizabeth and Seymour. In one particular conversation between the two on the day before Twelfth Night 1549, Parry remarked on the goodwill and mutual affections he had seen between Elizabeth and Admiral Seymour. Mrs. Ashley then expressed her wishes for Elizabeth to marry Seymour over all living men, and proceeded to tell Parry all about the late Queen’s jealousies and how Elizabeth being caught in an embrace with Seymour was the reason for her being sent away from Catherine’s house.

Perhaps realizing she had said too much, Ashley begged Parry to keep what she had divulged a secret, for she knew that “her Grace should be dishonoured for ever and she likewise undone.” To which Parry responded that he would “rather be pulled with horses” than repeat what he had been told.⁴⁰

Over the next few weeks, Seymour’s treacherous actions against his brother came to light. On January 21, 1549, Mrs. Ashley and Mr. Parry were both taken into custody for questioning about Elizabeth’s involvement with Seymour’s subversive actions, while Robert Tyrwhit was left behind to get a statement from Elizabeth herself. When told that Kat and Parry had been arrested, Elizabeth was deeply troubled and wept profusely. She demanded to know if they had confessed anything, which led Trywhit to believe there was certainly something to be obtained from the three of them. Elizabeth continued to oblige her interrogator with pieces of information regarding her correspondence with Seymour, all of which was already known. She

³⁹ Plowden, Alison. *The Young Elizabeth*. New York: Stein and Day, 1971. 106.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 107.

maintained her innocence of any ill activity as well as the innocence of her Lady Ashley and Mr. Parry. Her loyalty to them never wavered, but they would not return the favor.

Both Parry and Ashley made detailed confessions implicating Elizabeth. Parry was the first to break, confessing everything he knew and had been told regarding the relationship between Elizabeth and Seymour. After confronting Parry about his breaking the promise, Ashley confessed all she knew about the behaviors between Elizabeth and Seymour at Catherine's house. Tyrwhit presented Elizabeth with these written confessions on February 5. She was "much abashed and half breathless ere she could read it to an end, and perused all their names perfectly and knew both Mrs. Ashley's hand and the Cofferer's with half a sight, so that fully she thinketh they have both confessed all they know."⁴¹ She knew both their handwriting without question. She was told that Parry had confessed first. To which Elizabeth commented that "it was a great matter for [Parry] to promise such a promise, and to break it."⁴²

Consequences for Elizabeth's household

The situation was bad for Elizabeth's image and reputation, and it certainly did nothing for the reputations of Parry or Ashley. It broke the circle of trust that the three of them had shared exclusively up to that point. But it certainly was nothing illegal and nothing to be accused of treason. There was no evidence that Parry, Ashley, or Elizabeth herself had ever been involved in a secret plot to marry Elizabeth to Seymour. In fact, she continued to insist that both she and her servants were of that mind that she "never...marry, neither in England nor out of England, without the consent of the king's majesty, your grace [Somerset], and the council's."⁴³ However, the whole situation convinced the Lord Protector that Ashley was no

⁴¹ Neale, 26.

⁴² Tytler, P.F. *England under the Reigns of Edward VI and Mary*. Vol. I London: Adamant Media Corporation, 2003.

⁴³ Strickland, Agnes. *Lives of the Queen of England IV*. London: Colburn & Co., 1851. 36-37.

longer fit to serve as Elizabeth's governess and she was replaced with Tyrwhit's wife. Elizabeth took this turn of events hardest of all, weeping for many days and stubbornly refusing to acknowledge Lady Tyrwhit as Kat's replacement. Parry was also replaced as her financial officer.

Her two closest friends and confidants had betrayed her trust and spilled her secrets. Then they had been taken away from her and replaced with strangers. Her good name was being slandered with the tales of lewd behavior with Seymour. Tales circulated throughout the country that she was locked up in the Tower, pregnant with Seymour's child. As she was with the first round of controversy with Seymour, her primary concern seems to have been in her reputation and the picture being painted of her to the English people. She wrote to the Lord Protector begging him to "send forth a proclamation into the counties, that they refrain their tongues, declaring how the tales be but lies, it should make both the people think that you and the Council have great regard that no such rumours should be spread of any of the King's Majesty's sisters..."⁴⁴ It seemed that everything Elizabeth had treasured up to this point in her life was being taken away. It is during this time that Elizabeth was trying to figure out exactly what her place in the world was. She was a princess, recognized by her father. Was she to be married to Seymour? Was her place on the throne or quietly in the background while other around her made her life decisions for her? Should she remain the pure object of the council's whims, or become the desired prize that she was being made feel like by Seymour? Was she the beloved mistress of these two servants, or a means to empower themselves only to be betrayed with the first sign of danger? What a traumatic time for a mere 15 year old!

After the Seymour affair ended with his execution, the remainder of Edward's reign passed uneventfully for Elizabeth. She lived quietly, moving from house to house. Since she had

⁴⁴ Letter to Edward Seymour, Lord Protector

been vindicated of any part in the Seymour scandal to take over control of the King, she was allowed to resume visits to Court to see her brother.⁴⁵ The Seymour scandals had taught her a valuable lesson about discretion and trust. She was forced to grow up quickly in the wake of these slanderous events. David Starkey interprets the situation in this way:

The psychological dossier might go like this. Elizabeth had been abused by Seymour. Like many abused children, she had fallen in love with her abuser. But this love was associated with feelings of guilt and self-loathing which prevented its fulfillment. In the fullness of time, the circle turned, and Elizabeth, also like many abused children, became a sort of abuser in turn. Denied fulfillment herself, she took pleasure in denying it to others. She played with her suitors like an angler with a fish; and she enforced a reluctant celibacy on her favourites and maids.⁴⁶

To put Elizabeth's behavior in this sort of psychological box makes sense. However, it is not the point. The point here comes down not to her feelings toward Seymour, but to her feelings toward Parry and Ashley. Her loyalty to them never wavered. She refused to implicate either of them in the schemes, when they in fact encouraged her more than anyone to pursue a relationship with Seymour, and whose implication may have relieved some of the pressures she felt. "They were her fixed points in a changeable world and on them her security depended."⁴⁷ While they betrayed her trust and sold her out to their interrogators, she never faltered in her defense of their intentions and behavior. Elizabeth lost her trust in them, but she made sure no one ever had a reason to mistrust her.

⁴⁵ Jones, 82.

⁴⁶ *Elizabeth: Struggle for the Throne*. 76.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 77.

The Scars to Elizabeth's Psyche

The arrest of Ashley and Parry had significant repercussions for Elizabeth's mental and developmental state. The trust issues that had begun in infancy and grew roots in the first round of Seymour controversy blossomed into an almost fully fledged paranoia. While Elizabeth maintained a cool exterior when presented with the evidence of their betrayal, the disloyalty of the two people she trusted most in the world just fanned the flame of her general mistrust in others and the world around her.

According to Erikson's criteria, Elizabeth was passing between Stage five and Stage six in his developmental theory. Revisiting this theory shows that Stage five is identified as the identity vs. role confusion stage. Most children experience this stage during early adolescence. During this time of life, adolescents are trying to discover a sense of self and come to terms with their personal identity. They are searching for an answer to the question "who am I." If answered properly, they are instilled with a faith in life and a sense of grander purpose. If they cannot come up with an appropriate answer, they become confused about their role in the world and are unable to commit to a specific identity.⁴⁸

Erikson calls stage six the intimacy vs. isolation stage. Young adults usually experience this stage. It is during this time that individuals are learning to develop loving, intimate relationships with others. If they are confident in their personal identity (stage five) they will be able to form intimate and serious relationships. This helps them understand and experience the strength of love. Identity confusion (stage five) results in an inability to be intimate with others and causes the young adult to instead form superficial relationships while experiencing overall isolation.

⁴⁸ Steele, Les. "The Power of Erikson." In *Nurture That is Christian; Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education*, by James C. and John M. Dettoni ed Wilhoit, 98. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.

Elizabeth's Stage five development was hampered by her crisis of personal identity, amplified by conflicting advice from those around her. Elizabeth was learning to answer the question "who am I"- Edward's regime told her one thing, and someone she was close to acted as if she was someone else.⁴⁹ The council told her she was but a mere sister to the king, whose life would be decided by their choices and who was to remain innocent and quiet until that time they needed her. The actions of Ashley and Parry, however, told her that she was a desired young woman, whose heart should lead her to a future with Seymour. She was made to believe that she could have a life with Seymour, who was becoming more powerful. Elizabeth was no longer merely the king's sister, but a powerful player in England's destiny. She was left to reconcile the question of her own identity, her place in this society. The trust she had placed in those around her to aid her in figuring out her grander purpose in life was betrayed. Now where could she turn to answer the question of her own usefulness? She had been used by Seymour and her confidence abused by Ashley and Parry. She was left floundering in her own confusion, unsure of who she really was and what she was really meant to do.

This poor development of Stage five, Erikson notes, led to an immediate crisis in Stage six: intimacy vs. isolation. Not only was Elizabeth unsure of her own identity and purpose, but she had been given up by those in whom she had bonded most closely. She had formed a meaningful relationship with these people to replace the isolation she experienced as a young child. And now, that relationship was squandered by deception. How could she ever trust another intimate relationship not to end just like these? Elizabeth eventually welcomed both Ashley and Parry back into her house and her service, but their relationships were forever altered. Never again did she confide in them as she once had. In fact, she would never confide in anyone that

⁴⁹ Wright, J. E. Jr. *Erikson: Identity and religion*. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

way. As Erikson points out, love is being understood during this stage.⁵⁰ For Elizabeth, every sense of the concept Love had ended in heartbreak. The love she felt for Seymour disgraced her, the love she felt for her friends betrayed her. Her warped sense of love and affection, twisted during her sexual awakening with Seymour years before, was now completely twisted by mistrust. As such, Elizabeth's ability to develop and maintain intimate, trusting, loving relationships would be forever hampered. In fact, it could be said that she never developed a truly loving, trusting relationship with anyone. Instead, she makes superficial relationships that only exist on the surface level. They are mutually beneficial to both parties, but never allow for true intimacy, physical or emotional.⁵¹ In this way, although Elizabeth surrounded herself with people and admirers for the rest of her life, she remained truly isolated.

Elizabeth as Queen

We see this in Elizabeth's adulthood over and over. It has been established that Elizabeth had major issues as Queen trusting any of her advisors to make decisions for her. Yet it is clear from the comparison of her relationships with her advisors to that of her siblings' that she could not develop trusting relationships. Both Edward and Mary, and even Henry VIII, had particular members of court to whom they became extremely close. Sometimes it was a member of their Privy Council, the men who helped make the big decisions for the nation. Other times it was a member of their chamber, the men or women who were with them nearly 24/7. This servant attended to the monarch's every need, personal or professional. Most of the kings and queens became very close to these people, developing confidences with them and sharing their most intimate feelings and fears.

⁵⁰ Erikson, Erik. The Life Cycle Completed, A Review. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982.

⁵¹ Steele, 98.

Elizabeth, while surrounded with advisors and courtiers, never did. It could be said that the closest thing she ever had to a meaningful, trusting relationship was that with Lord William Cecil. Cecil was Elizabeth's first and most prominent advisor for the majority of her reign. His was the advice she most often adhered to, and he was the one she could count on most often to lead her in the right direction. They served together for decades, until he preceded her in death. Yet even Cecil was never privy to the inner most thoughts and fears of the Queen. She never fully let her guard down to him or anyone else. The superficial relationships that she made with those who were bound and required to serve and adore her never fulfilled that need for loving and intimate friends. Perhaps that is another reason why Elizabeth never married. She could not bring herself to trust anyone enough to be completely open with them. Emotional intimacy was as far away as any kind of physical intimacy. In a world where she was the center of all attentions, she lived a truly lonely life.

Chapter 4: The Face of a Revolution

The Seymour affair would not be the only time in Elizabeth's young life that she would face danger and suspicion of treason. Nor would it be the last time that the words, actions, and intentions of others would prove dangerous for Elizabeth. In 1553, Edward died and Mary became Queen Mary I. Under Mary's reign, Elizabeth would face continual suspicion and repeated imprisonment. In fact, Elizabeth would spend a good portion of Mary's reign under house arrest for suspected involvement in plots to depose the Queen and install herself as Queen. Elizabeth's actual involvement in these plots is questionable, but no evidence has been found of direct contact with the rebellion leaders. The most famous of these attempts is Wyatt's rebellion.

Mary's reign began as triumphant and she rode a wave of popular support. She was the daughter of Henry VIII and beloved by the people. She promised religious moderation and vowed to take a husband as soon as possible. The Emperor had urged Mary to proceed with caution on matters of religion, and initially she moved carefully, challenging her subjects not to hate each other.⁵² The people hoped for a quick heir to ensure England's security and a break from the fanatical religious policies of Edward. With such a loving reception from the people and her place on the throne secured, Mary even extended sisterly kindness to Elizabeth. When Mary rode into London on July 30, 1553, Elizabeth rode at her side. As they rode together through the streets of London, the Spanish ambassador made mental notes about Elizabeth.

This first sight of Elizabeth, riding through the streets on a summer evening, told him almost everything he needed to know about her. An extremely good horsewoman, she was always seen to her advantage on horseback, while the way she looked and bore herself, no less than her aquiline nose and the tint of her hair, were immediately

⁵² Weir, Alison. *The Children of Henry VIII*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2008. 201.

recognized by anyone who had seen Henry VIII. It was said at once how much more like him the younger daughter was than the elder, and as she passed, white and smiling, the vital current of personal popularity magnetized the shouting crowds.⁵³

The ambassador recognized how dangerous Elizabeth's popularity could be to Mary. If Mary could have been persuaded to marry an Englishman and continue on her path of gradual and peaceful religious reform, perhaps her story would have played out differently. However, her choice of a foreign husband in Philip of Spain and her pursuit of zealous Catholic religious policies quickly lost her the support of her council and the people.

The first area of contention was Mary's choice of husband. Her council firmly recommended that she marry an Englishman. The English people were already xenophobic and the thought of a foreigner coming in and taking over the throne of England was unbearable. However, for several months before her ascension to the throne, Mary had been in talks with the Emperor Charles about the possibility of marrying his son Philip, Prince of Spain. Not only was Philip a devout Catholic, as Mary herself, but he was from Spanish stock, as Mary's beloved mother Catherine of Aragon. Mary identified with the Spanish royal house and tethered both her heart and her political future to the advice and influence of Spain. An agreement had been reached between Charles and Mary that Philip should become her husband upon her taking the throne.

When Mary broke the news to her council that she intended to marry Philip of Spain, no one was pleased; "Mary's announcement of her intended marriage with Philip of Spain was greeted with widespread, furious dismay. The reformers were alarmed at the idea of a powerful Catholic alliance, but the nation as a whole was united in a thorough detestation of

⁵³ Jenkins, 40-41.

foreigners.”⁵⁴The council knew that with an enthusiastic Catholic like Philip as King, the supposed moderation in religion would be short lived. Mary had already begun sweeping away the entirety of the Edwardian religious settlement and repealing the treason acts passed during both Henry and Edward’s reigns. Her ultimate goal was to reconcile England to Rome and come back under the power and influence of the Pope, but she had so far been treading lightly toward that goal. England’s subjects were not ready yet to return to Rome: “The spirit of national pride and independence fostered by Henry’s defiance of the Pope was a powerful driving-force and, even more to the point, a large number of family fortunes had been founded on the spoils of the Reformation. Certainly no holder of church lands was now going to part with a foot of his plunder without a bitter struggle.”⁵⁵

The council also feared that bringing in a foreign power to share Mary’s throne would drag England into Spain’s conflicts, which were frequent, costly, and violent. Nobody was excited by the prospect of war, with its promise of loss of life and money. Mary tried to assure her council that her first concern was still the welfare of the English people, but they were relentless in their concerns. Yet Mary was resolved to have Philip or no husband at all. Once Mary set her mind to a decision, there was no moving her. As the thought of an unwed Queen was simply unthinkable, the council finally gave in and sent their blessing on the marriage. Mary’s subjects, however, were not so gracious.

When it became clear that Mary was set in her decision to marry Philip, some of Mary’s subjects began to look for alternatives. The most promising seemed to be the union of Elizabeth and Edward Courtenay. Courtenay was the great-grandson of Edward IV and of pure royal blood. He had spent many years in prison as a threat to the Tudor throne, but Mary had released

⁵⁴ Jenkins, 43.

⁵⁵ Plowden, 149.

him and tried to be kind, even though she had no intention of marrying him (as her advisors urged her). Some of the disgruntled English nobility, aided by the French ambassador, began a scheme of uprising to depose Mary, marry Elizabeth to Courtenay, and set the newlyweds as King and Queen of England. The bonus became that they planned in the process to show incredible violence against Philip and his host of Spanish attendants. Nobody thought to ask the two young people how they felt about the plan. If they had, they would have found that neither party wanted any part in this alliance. Courtenay, for his part, wanted marriage to “some simple girl”, not to Elizabeth, who was to him a heretic and “too proud.”⁵⁶ It was true that Elizabeth possessed much of her father’s natural authority and showed a strange, almost eerie brightness. She had no desire to marry Courtenay, who was in fact too simple for her and a devout Catholic. Here again, we see Elizabeth falling victim to those around her making her life decisions. Her interests and desires were not being taken into account, only what those in power thought would bring them most prosperity.

Wyatt’s Rebellion

On January 12, 1554, the marriage treaty for Mary and Philip was signed and the hotbed of unrest began stirring up in earnest. A dog was thrown into Mary’s Presence Chamber at Court with shaved head, cropped ears, a halter about its neck and a label saying all priests and bishops should be hanged.⁵⁷ Within a week, word reached London that, among others, Sir Thomas Wyatt was rising up throughout the countryside “for the said quarrel in resisting the said King of Spain...and partly for moving certain councilors from about the Queen.”⁵⁸ News came pouring in that several of the most powerful nobles in the country, among them Sir James Crofts of

⁵⁶ Jenkins, 43.

⁵⁷ Neale, 35.

⁵⁸ Plowden, 153.

Wales, the Duke of Suffolk, and Sir Peter Carew, were all leaving their homes and engaging in mysterious behavior.

Wyatt's uprising was originally scheduled for March, when Philip was slated to arrive. However, someone let the secret of their plans slip, and they had to move up their intended actions. It is believed that the weak link was actually Courtenay, who lost his nerve and confessed the plan to the Lord Chancellor. Across the countryside, men and ammunition were defecting from the Queen's service and coming over to Wyatt as he marched toward London. On January 30, as he neared London, he announced his terms to the Queen's men. Mary was to be sent to the Tower which he was to then be given charge of, several of Mary's councilors were to be replaced with men of his choosing, and the future of the government would be decided by Wyatt and his co-conspirators. Mary was in a tricky situation indeed. The loyalty of the citizens of London was all that stood between her and disaster, and their loyalty was doubtful at best. But in an unusual display of power and control, Mary rode in the city on February 1 and gave a rousing speech in Guildhall. The citizens rose to her and when Wyatt reached the bridge into London two days later, they had heavily armored it against him. After nearly a week of stalemate, Wyatt turned his forces down river to Kingston where they crossed unhampered. As his troops marched through London, tired, hungry, and no longer motivated to fight, Wyatt was separated from his main group of soldiers and yielded to Sir Maurice Berkeley at Temple Bar. On February 7, Wyatt was arrested and sent to the Tower.

Elizabeth's Part Played

Through his entire ordeal, Elizabeth had been lying close in her house at Ashridge. Two or three days before Wyatt's uprising Mary had written to Elizabeth and the reply was that Elizabeth was too ill to write. Mary's spies then discovered that Wyatt had written to Elizabeth

and advised her to move from Ashridge to Donnington Hall in Berkshire. Here she would be further away from London and could defend herself, if needed, until the rebellion passed. When this was discovered, the Queen immediately sent for Elizabeth to come to London. As a reply was awaited, the French ambassador was seized and his courier searched. In his bag, Mary's governors found a copy of Elizabeth's letter to the Queen. Although there was nothing inherently illegal about this, and Elizabeth was not necessarily responsible, the governors naturally jumped to the conclusion that she was in regular communication with the ambassador. As if this were not enough, Elizabeth, not knowing of the discovery, sent a reply to the Queen that she was too ill to fulfill the Queen's request to come to London.

None of these events added up to good for Elizabeth. As soon as she put down the rebellion, Mary sent three councilors as well as her personal physicians to bring Elizabeth to London if she could by any means be moved. While her illness was real, she could be moved slowly. In slow stages she came to London. Mary was sure of Elizabeth's involvement in the plot and if it could be proven, there was no hope for mercy. Wyatt was examined and re-examined for evidence to convict Elizabeth, but no hard proof of Elizabeth's compliance could be found. He admitted to writing to her twice and receiving replies, but they were verbal replies only and amounted to nothing. Having been unable to find concrete evidence to convict her, yet being unwilling to let her out of their reach, the council decided that Elizabeth should be sent to the Tower for the time being.⁵⁹

After several more weeks of interrogating every possible witness, it was determined that there was insufficient evidence to convict Elizabeth of anything in connection to the uprising. What should be done with her now? She could not be kept in the Tower, or set free. She could not be housed at Court, so the only thing left was to send her away under house arrest to a

⁵⁹ Weir, 258-261.

country manor. The place chosen was Woodstock in Oxfordshire. Sir Henry Bedingfield, a member of the Privy Council, was chosen as her custodian. Here she would remain for the majority of Mary's reign.⁶⁰

But on a deeper note, she had problems with setting a precedent of uprising. "She had serious concerns about the impact of repeated usurpations on the standing and security of the monarchy."⁶¹ If she bowed to pressure and took her sister's throne through a rebellion, what was to prevent someone from doing the same to her? As she saw men who had once sworn their allegiance to Mary with their lives defect and run to her cause, she realized truly how fickle men are. Once the heir to the throne was out in the open, nothing stopped subjects from turning tail on the current monarch when things did not go as they wished. This realization would leave a lasting impact on her psyche. She also paid close attention to the way Mary handled threats of rebellion. This too would make a permanent impression on her as the future Queen.

Justice in Elizabeth's Eyes

The question to be answered in this story is that of justice. Was justice served for Mary? For Elizabeth? Was Elizabeth's imprisonment just? How would these years of captivity based on fear rather than fact affect Elizabeth's interpretation of justice? Psychologically and developmentally, this is perhaps the most important aspect of the story.

The concept of justice is revisited as we look at Elizabeth's situation through the lens of Lawrence Kohlberg. At this time, Elizabeth is making the transition from the conventional stage to the post-conventional stage, or level III. Kohlberg classifies the post-conventional stage as one where people often struggle with the idea of purely keeping the law in every situation to ensure justice. Because just laws are now judged by principles, level III persons can determine that

⁶⁰ *Elizabeth, The Struggle for the Throne*. 147-150.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 159.

unjust laws need to be changed. They learn to value the process by which laws are changed. Right and wrong are now defined as living out moral principles or not. As these persons develop, moral principles grow from being purely external or being internalized. These internalized principles of morality are the new source of moral authority, and these principles are the motivation for level III persons to act rightly. Moral action is now an issue of being true to themselves; they have no choice but to act rightly.

As law are defined as good or bad by how just they are, and justice is defined by moral principles, Elizabeth is left with a serious question of how just the laws of her land have been. She was imprisoned for something she claimed to be innocent of based on the laws and ideals of justice that existed under her sister's leadership. Therefore, justice was not served in her eyes. It could be said that this was a turning point in her attitude both toward Mary (as a sister and a Queen) and toward her own aspirations of the throne. Elizabeth was becoming more committed to justice as she saw it in its purest form, rather than simply what the laws state.

Elizabeth now has an understanding of her purpose. Up to this point, it is unclear how much she actually aspired to become Queen. She believed her chances of sitting on the throne were slim and it could be said that she did not actively engage in attempts to take the crown. However, now that she sees justice perverted in the realm, an attitude shift occurs. Now, she *wants* to become Queen in order to fix a broken system. The only way to ensure the laws are just is to change them to match her ideas of moral principles. Now she has a real reason and a purpose behind her drive to become Queen. As Kohlberg states, her morality and sense of justice have now become a personal issue. She has no choice but to act as she believes.⁶² She would continue to defy Mary's orders to go to Mass and convert to Catholicism. Her own moral

⁶² Stonehouse, 68.

conscience would not allow it. Upon her ascension as Queen, this drive for just laws based on her ideal moral principles would propel her to repeal or change nearly all of Mary's policies.

Justice in Elizabethan England

The effects of this drawn out episode can be easily spotted in her decisions as England's leader. The handling of one particular woman, Mary Queen of Scots, illuminates this stamp of justice and fair treatment on Elizabeth. Mary was a direct descendant of Henry VII and therefore had a legitimate claim to the English throne. She was the rightful Queen of Scotland and the Queen of France through her first husband. Both France and Scotland were powerful Catholic nations, and the English people feared that with England sandwiched between them, a Catholic offense would be mounted to put Mary on the throne of all three nations. All through her reign, Elizabeth kept a close eye on Mary. After her first husband died, Mary returned to Scotland and re-married. The son that resulted, James, would go on to become King of both Scotland and England. Mary herself believed she was the true heir to the throne of England, since Elizabeth was illegitimate and a heretic. She was involved in numerous plots to kill Elizabeth and take the throne.⁶³ Elizabeth's treatment of Mary and the entire succession situation are clear reflections of her time as Mary Tudor's prisoner.

Elizabeth refused, once it became clear that she was past the age of marriage and child bearing, to name her successor. Her council urged her constantly to name her successor to ensure a safe and smooth transition should something happen to her. Most people agreed (albeit some begrudgingly) that Mary of Scots seemed the most likely choice since she did have a blood claim to the throne. As much as Elizabeth abhorred the idea of a conservative Catholic successor, even more she feared naming her heir before her days were done. All too clear in her mind were the memories of how Mary Tudor's supporters deserted her and ran to Elizabeth's side in times of

⁶³ Neale, 267.

discontent. She would not have her loyalty challenged in such a way. She could not ensure or trust that her own subjects would not flee to the next in line when Elizabeth's actions were not popular. By waiting until the very last moment, nearly on her deathbed, to name her heir she ensured that the people had no monarch but herself.

Additionally, her treatment of Mary of Scots showed her developed sense of justice and just law. Although Mary was a political rival seeking her throne, Elizabeth allowed her sanctuary in England after she was run out of Scotland by her disgruntled subjects. Nothing was more disgusting to Elizabeth than a monarch not being respected by his subjects: "Although deeply offended and angered by many of Mary's actions, Elizabeth was initially more greatly troubled by the actions of the Scottish lords against their rightful queen. That subjects should presume to judge their sovereign was unthinkable to Elizabeth..."⁶⁴ As previously mentioned, Elizabeth's respect for the office of the sovereign was unimpeachable. It would never be morally just to harm another sovereign, another leader ordained and chosen by God. This very personal principle of justice was unshakable in Elizabeth. Perhaps she saw herself in Mary, the unwitting participant in other men's schemes. The difference came when irrefutable evidence arose that implicated Mary in assassination plots against Elizabeth. Although she was finally forced to sign a warrant ordered Mary's execution, "she recoiled from the deed and projected her guilt onto others."⁶⁵ Though her hand was forced, she never let go of the principle of justice that was so deeply engrained in her. The act was just in that the facts were clear and that principle of harm no monarch was not upheld by Mary.

A good portion of this sense of justice and the development of Elizabeth's moral principles of justice revolve around the fact that Elizabeth did not participate in the plots against

⁶⁴ Taylor-Smith, Larissa J. "Elizabeth I: A Psychological Profile." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 1984: 69.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 70.

Mary Tudor and was therefore imprisoned unfairly. Yet we must ask, does the situation change if Elizabeth did in fact participate in the plans? Did Elizabeth in fact take part in the plot? It is impossible to say for sure. J.E. Neale sums it up best, "It is difficult to believe that she was ignorant of the conspiracy. She may not have approved of it, for it was not in her nature to rejoice at the prospect of receiving a crown at the hands of rebels...But supposing she both knew and disapproved, she could neither resist nor betray men who were devoted to her cause."⁶⁶ Her scruples with uprisings were both personal and political. Elizabeth was, if nothing else, a true royal. She respected royalty and all the earthly entitlements that went along with it. She was always against taking the life of another royal, even if it was necessary to ensure her own safety or the continuation of her reign. With this in mind, she would never have wanted her sister harmed. Nor would her respect for the throne and the divine right with which the king ruled have allowed her to take the crown by means of deposition. She had deep convictions regarding legitimacy and a profound respect for the law.⁶⁷ If she wanted people to respect her as Henry's daughter, she must respect his wishes as set forth in his Act of Succession. Therefore, perhaps the development of her moral principles of justice were based less on whether or not she was innocent of the conspiracy and more on her unshakable loyalty to the idea of divine rule.

Whatever the true case of her hesitations, we see the impacts of the Wyatt's rebellion incident echo far into Elizabeth's future. Her treatment of specific persons and her choices about the succession question show how much she still felt the sting of that injustice.

⁶⁶ Neale, 37.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 275.

Chapter 5: Potential Problems

By examining a few of specific traumatic events in the formative years of Elizabeth Tudor, we have seen how developmental psychology can be used to help explain some of the more unusual and tradition-challenging decision she made as an adult monarch. However, while these explanations can serve to help one understand this complex and fascinating woman, we must realize that there are potential problems with drawing these kinds of conclusions. The sheer passage of time between that when Elizabeth lived and that in which Erikson and Kohlberg wrote can be a hurdle. Additionally, we must not ignore the other factors that played a part in the decisions Elizabeth made as Queen of England.

Passage of Time

Elizabeth Tudor lived from the mid to late 16th century. Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg developed their theories of moral psychology in the 20th century. The passing of five centuries can cause significant difficulties in connection these theories to practices of so many years before. Many things were different about the world in which Elizabeth grew up and questions must be asked about the validity of the connections. For example, Erikson and Kohlberg are dealing primarily with a normal or average childhood. But an average childhood in 16th century England and 20th century America or Europe were very different. Going a step further, we must ask, what constitutes a normal childhood?

In Elizabeth's day, it was normal for a child to be taught early about responsibility and adulthood. Children were treated as adults from a very early age: "parents develop a some-what cool, detached, and at times slightly suspicious attitude toward children, looking upon them as miniature adults because only when they become adults will the dangers of losing them

diminish.”⁶⁸ Young people were not encouraged to be care-free or happy-go-lucky, but rather to realize the harsh realities of life: poor sanitation, poor healthcare, and a high chance that most of them would not make it to adulthood.

Today, parents and adults are encouraged over and over to let children be children, to not try and make them into miniature adults. It has been researched and discovered that children need the formative years of exploration, imagination, and fun in order to shape a mature and viable adult personality. Children need to be protected from some of life’s harsher realities until they are psychologically and emotionally prepared to handle them maturely. In the days in which Elizabeth grew up, most children were thrown headfirst into the deep end of life’s darkest truths, whether through personal experience with family or friends, or through the tales of those around them. If simply the meaning of being a child was so much different in those days, can we aptly compare Elizabeth to modern children in their senses of development and moral psychology? The answer is yes, for two reasons. First of all, Erikson and Kohlberg worked diligently at making sure that their principles of moral development were not specific to a certain time, place, ethnic group, or religion. Their theories are meant to span time and culture, to be applicable to any child, anywhere, any time. These men meant for their theories to survive, to be just as real for children a hundred years from now to children five hundred years before. By searching out common denominators from the many children they researched and followed, they ensured their findings could be applied to any and every child.

Second, Elizabeth was not the typical child of the 16th century. Her status as a member of the royal family (sometimes recognized, sometimes not) gave her a closer relationship with

⁶⁸ Berry, Boyd M. "The First English Pediatricians and Tudor Attitudes Toward Childhood." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1974: 561.

children of the 20th century than a child one might find on the streets of London during Henry's reign. Elizabeth, growing up in the airs of the royal tradition (and not being a presumptive heir to the throne) was allowed time for frivolity and imagination. In fact, one of the most vocal supporters for this practice of time, John Ascham, was her tutor for many years. In reference to how Elizabeth should be educated, Ascham wrote this to Kat Ashley, "Good mistress, I would have you in any case to labour and not give yourself to ease. And yet, to favour somewhat this rare intelligence for the younger, the more tender, the quicker, the easier to break. The process must be like pouring water into a goblet: too much at once will dash out, but slowly it might be filled to the brim."⁶⁹ We see that Elizabeth was brought up more like a child of the 20th century: guided but not forced, encouraged to be disciplined but allowed room to breathe.

So while the passage of nearly five hundred years and the difference in attitude toward children can leave a hole in drawing lines between the minds of children, the diligence of Erikson and Kohlberg to timeless theories and the unique upbringing of Elizabeth during her time make her a more susceptible candidate to the parallels.

Other Influencing Factors

It would be remiss to say that the events of her childhood were the only things that influenced the decision and leadership stance Elizabeth took as Queen. There were innumerable factors that fed into making her the woman she was and shaping the policies she supported. The most prominent were religion, economics, and international relations.

Elizabeth's religion has always been somewhat of an enigma to her observers. While outwardly she professed to support the Reformed Faith, she still kept relics of Catholicism in her private chapel. Elizabeth lived her life as a Protestant, but she obliged Mary and attended mass during her sister's reign. This was probably done more to save her own life than because she felt

⁶⁹ Jenkins, 21.

it in her heart.⁷⁰ Nobody really knows Elizabeth's true religious convictions or how deep they may have run. We do know that she sympathized most with the Reformed faith like her brother, but to a lesser degree. What her true and deepest religious beliefs were, if she even had any, we may never know.

Prior to Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, England had been torn apart by years of religious turmoil and violent religious persecution. She herself was almost victim to it under Mary's crown. When she became Queen, the relief she felt from this religious pressure may be seen in one of her earliest prayers as Queen: "Thy grace hath looked with favor upon me since my youth and from that time has miraculously set me up in this Thy kingdom."⁷¹ The question of what kind of religious climate England would experience under Elizabeth was on everyone's mind.

Her first major proclamation after becoming queen was made the day after Christmas 1558. She prohibited any unlicensed preaching in the kingdom. She did this in order to prevent those returning from exile on the continent from spreading wicked rumors and inciting the people. This was followed by a proclamation prohibiting any rite, ceremony, or prayer in the church that had not already been used.⁷² It was clear that Elizabeth saw the need for change, but did not want to bring about the chaos that had ensued under both Edward and Mary. In other words, "Elizabeth possessed a flexibility of mind that some of her subordinates lacked. She was well aware of the need for stability unlike her half-brother and sister..."⁷³ Her policies were

⁷⁰ Weir, Alison. The Children of Henry VIII. New York: Ballantine Books, 2008. P. 199

⁷¹ Marcus, Leah S. and Mary Beth Rose ed. Elizabeth I, Queen of England, Collected Works. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000. P. 138

⁷² Solt, Leo F. Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, 1990. P. 66

⁷³ Rosman, Doreen. From Catholic to Protestant: Religion and the People in Tudor England. London: Routledge, 1996. P. 34

driven from a desire for peace, for reconciliation. She seemed to be both eager to shift the nation away from Catholicism and determined to find a compromise between the two factions.

In all reality, her measures were quite conciliatory to both Catholics and Protestants. The official policy was that every citizen was to belong to the Church of England. However, in actuality, those who were Catholic were allowed to continue their practice in the privacy of their own homes. They were no longer allowed to attend Mass, nor were they allowed to gather in large groups for Mass in someone's home. They were still required to attend the Church of England once a week, as the law stated, but if they did not cause trouble, continued to swear loyalty to Elizabeth as their queen, and did not stir up Catholic dissent, there was no reason why these people could not continue to take Mass with their family in their own homes. Clearly what religion people practiced in their hearts was not as important to Elizabeth as their loyalty they held in their hearts for her person and her throne. She was insistent on finding a compromise. She was not interested in changing men's hearts. Instead, her goal was to give the people a renewed sense of identity as Englishmen and English Christians.

Elizabeth's political decisions were also influenced by economic issues and questions of foreign policy. When Elizabeth became Queen, the government had virtually no money. The frivolous spending of her father had left little in the treasury and the costly wars England had been pulled into as a result of Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain had drained the coffers even more. One of her first priorities was replenishing the stores and restoring the prosperity of her people. This was not easily done, as both Elizabeth and her court had costly tastes. Additionally, there was always someone urging her to go to war with some country or another. She resisted the call for war, partially because of the lack of funds, and partially because of England's weak military.

The weak military power England possessed, its status as nearly broke, and the poor political decisions made since Henry's death and made England low on the list of European powers. Elizabeth sought to change that. She wanted to bring England back to its former glory under the days of her father. Under her reign, England would become a forced to be reckoned with, both militarily and politically. Her head council, Lord Cecil Burleigh, kept careful notes of the entire goings on of the kingdom. His notes, "show his conviction that England was always menaced by a potential attack of the concerted forces of Catholic Europe. He notes the great expense the Queen presently sustaineth to defend her estate against a navy set out by the Pope and succored by the Kings of Spain, France, and Portugal."⁷⁴ Not until the English navy faced off against the Spanish armada and destroyed them in battle was the major threat of war with every Catholic nation in Europe relieved.

All things considered, what was the legacy Elizabeth left behind for England?

Elizabethan England has come to be known as the "Golden Age." During her reign England became the richest, most powerful nation in the world. It built up the most advanced and successful navy Europe had ever seen. The treasury went from completely empty to overflowing. Quality of life drastically improved. England colonized half the world by the time Elizabeth died in 1603.⁷⁵ The reign of Elizabeth put to rest many of the concerns that had preceded her about a female ruler reigning without a king. She gave legitimacy to the idea of a single female monarch. Her strength in the face of four decades worth of world changes made her a force to be reckoned with and the standard for all European queens to follow her. In fact, it was her ability to lead like a king that allowed the people to have so much confidence in her. It would seem that in her mind she was more a king than a queen. In her famous speech to her troops facing the great Spanish

⁷⁴ Jenkins, 210.

⁷⁵ Neale, 383.

Armada she says, "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too...I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of your virtue in the field."⁷⁶

Concluding Thoughts

History agrees that Elizabeth Tudor is a fascinating historical figure. Her life is a vivid portrait of her times, and her reign changed the face of English history forever. She changed the game of what it meant to be a female monarch and laid the foundation for other women to rule successfully in the future. She was a creature of great mystery, both to her contemporaries and to modern researchers. Trying to understand and explain what made her do the things she did, when they were so unconventional and often unpopular amongst her advisors is a debate that will go on. Such is the case with any visionary and revolutionary person. What has been offered is one of many possible explanations into her mind and her reasoning. While the human mind is too complex to be explained with one avenue of research, understanding the connection between those traumatic and formative events of her childhood and adolescence and the resolution she had as an adult to go against the cultural tide may offer some insight. Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg help the modern researcher to comprehend a little better how at the most pivotal points in her life, she experienced something that would stick with her for the rest of her life. As mysterious as she was, perhaps now we understand better that titan of a Queen, the woman who stood alone when nobody believed she could and ruled with the heart and soul equal to that of any king. Elizabeth I will forever be known as one of history's most important figures and now we can see why.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth I. "To Be a King." The Penguin Book of Historical Speeches. London: Penguin, 1995.

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