

THE TWO REFORMATIONS  
IN THE 16th CENTURY

# THE TWO REFORMATIONS IN THE 16th CENTURY

A STUDY OF THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS  
AND CONSEQUENCES OF  
RENAISSANCE AND HUMANISM

*by*

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## PREFACE

This book deals with the religious aspects and consequences of the Renaissance and Humanism. It is therefore advisable that these terms should first be defined to some extent. By Renaissance is meant here the new element in Western European culture, which became more and more evident in Italy during the 15th century and in about 1500 completely dominated the great minds in that country. In the 16th century this new element was carried to the countries on the other side of the Alps, where it developed vigorously during that century. The new element in that culture is found in the plastic arts, literature, philosophy and also – and this is the subject of the present study – in a modified religious attitude. The following chapters will show the content of this last change. Problems such as: what in general characterizes the Renaissance, by what was it caused, when did it begin and, in particular, whether the Renaissance forms a sharp contrast to the Middle Ages or whether it is a direct continuation of it, will not be discussed here. It will be clear from the above definition that I have placed first and foremost those things in the Renaissance which distinguish it from the Middle Ages. I do not wish in any way to assert that *the* culture of Italy in the *Quattrocento* is Renaissance-like in character: after all, the Renaissance is, I would stipulate, the new element in that period, alongside which, as always, much that was old remained and could even exert a powerful influence.

By “Humanists” I mean the scholars and dilettanti who paid greater or lesser attention to the philosophy and literature of the Greeks and Romans, and who above all applied themselves to the study of the ancient languages. “Humanism” is then the view of life and the world predominating in their circles or coming under their influence.

When the terms orthodoxy, doctrine and rites are mentioned in what follows, they mean: those views of doctrine and liturgy which predominated in the Church under the guidance of the Pope, at the end of the Middle Ages, and which then counted as the normal views amongst the wide mass of priests and laymen. Consequently there can not be any misunderstanding when "mediaeval" views or the faith of mediaeval man are mentioned. As a matter of fact, these "orthodox" views never were the only views in the Catholic church: it is my fundamental opinion that always various interpretations were possible and had their adherents, alongside one another.

The word "modern" has been used to indicate what deviates from this orthodoxy in a direction which points to views that were to become current in later times.

I am no theologian and I see religion from the point of view of a layman. My justification may be that a multitude of laymen took part in the two Reformations in the 16th century. In particular it is their part in the building of our civilization which is treated in this book.

The translation of the Dutch text is by Drs. Jan F. Finlay, M.A., F.I.L., Harrogate, whom I would like to thank for his skill, diligence and devotion, as well as for his willingness to accept continual changes in the text. Moreover, Mrs Alison Hanham, M.A. Ph.D., of Manchester, was so kind as to read the English translation and suggested many corrections which I appreciate highly.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND PRINTING

This is an almost exact reprint of the first edition, only minor corrections and improvements having been made in names and translations.

In connection with questions raised by my reviewers I should like to make the following remarks. Chapter 3 only purports to give a picture of Roman Catholicism as it presented itself to the average citizen roundabout 1500. It was this type of Catholicism that was considered to be "orthodox" by the Church authorities and it was at this that both Erasmus and Luther levelled their criticism. By calling it "mediæval" I did not mean to say that it was found in this form all through the Middle Ages. Indeed much of what was taught by Humanists and Reformers had been taught by mediæval philosophers before them. All in all, however, I think we may look upon their beliefs as a new departure. I have to acknowledge with gratitude my indebtedness to Wilhelm Dilthey, Ernst Cassirer, Eugenio Garin, and in particular to the late Augustin Renaudet and Lucien Febvre. Their views on the Renaissance and the humanist Reformation correspond in so many respects to those held by me that I was able to borrow from them many quotations from many 15th century authors whose work I could not read in the original and without which I could not have finished the preparatory work for this study.

November, 1963.

H. A. E. v. G.

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