

# Church and State in Elizabethan England

By: Kyle Hooker

## **Humanities and Arts Course Sequence:**

PY 1731: Introduction to Philosophy and Religion, Term A 2017-2018

AR 1100: Essentials of Art, Term C 2017-2018

MU 1611: Fundamentals of Music I, Term D 2017-2018

HU 2999-EFB2: London HUA: International Studies, Term E1 2017-2017

HU 2999-DIS3: London HUA: International Studies, Term E1 2017-2017

Presented to: Professor David I. Spanagel

Department of Humanities & Arts

Term E1, 2017-2018

HU 3900-E106

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Humanities & Arts Requirement  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
Worcester, Massachusetts.

## **Introduction**

When King Henry VIII declared himself the one and only supreme power in England, rejecting the authority of the pope, he thought he was making a decision that would benefit both him and his country. But in fact, instead of unifying the country under a single church and state, the mistaken king divided his subjects' loyalties, throwing his country into nearly a century of turmoil and unrest. This paper seeks to examine the intricate relationship between the Catholic church and the English monarchy, or more generally, religion and secular authority, and interpret the impact that the consolidation of these powers during the English Reformation had on the people of England.

## **The Catholic Church**

In order to understand the significance of having a unified church and state, one must first understand them as separate institutions of power. The Catholic Church had been in power for over a millennium, and Christianity had been Europe's leading religion since its official adoption by the Roman Empire in 380AD.<sup>1</sup> It was through Roman influence that Christianity arrived in England, although the exact time of this arrival is not precisely known.<sup>2</sup> However, most

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<sup>1</sup> Although the acceptance of Christianity began in 312AD with the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the subsequent First Council of Nicaea in 325AD, it was not until 380AD under Emperor Theodosius I that Nicene Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire. (Theodosian Code XVI.i.2, in: Bettenson. Documents of the Christian Church. p. 31.) For more see Christopher Kelly, *The Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> While some scholars accredit the mission of St. Augustine in 597AD from Rome to convert King Aethelbert and become the first Archbishop of Canterbury as the birth of Christianity in Britain (thus Augustine of Canterbury's

historians agree that the Norman conquest of 1066AD by William the Conqueror saw the solidification of Christianity as the major religion in England.<sup>3</sup> Christianity and Catholicism at the time were synonymous, as Catholicism was the only accepted form of religion by the Catholic Church, with all other polytheistic religions being deemed “paganistic” and all other monotheistic religions being deemed “heretical.” England was not the only kingdom to feel the pressure of Christianity in the aftermath of the Roman Empire. During the early middle ages, most of Europe underwent Christianization, a process essentially complete by the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, the entire concept of “Europe” and the emergence of the “Western World” was intricately connected with Christianity. This is exemplified in the rise of the Holy Roman Empire (951-1806). Started in 951AD when the German King Otto came to the aid of Italy and married her Queen Adelaide, the Holy Roman Empire eventually was comprised of the Kingdoms of Germany, Italy, Bohemia, and Burgundy. In 962, Otto was crowned by Pope John XII,<sup>4</sup> thus marking German Kings the successors to the Roman Empire. During the height of its power, The Holy Roman Empire controlled all of central Europe (including the 1500s).<sup>5</sup> The Holy Roman Empire was entirely Catholic, as self-evident in its’ name, and by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the Kingdoms of France and Spain also sharing the ‘one true religion’ as their official religion, the

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title, “founder of the Church in England”) evidence suggests that Christianity had arrived much earlier, as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

Tim Lambert, "A Brief History of Christianity in England," Local Histories, accessed June 12, 2018, <http://www.localhistories.org/christian.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Magill, Frank (1998). Dictionary of World Biography. II. London: Fitzroy Dearborn.

<sup>5</sup> Cantor, Norman F. (1994). The Civilization of the Middle Ages. Harper Perennial. ISBN 978-0-06-092553-6.

terms “Catholic” and “Europe” were essentially inseparable.<sup>6</sup> The aftermath of this enormous influence can still be seen today: according to a PEW Research center poll, “In 2015, Christians remained the largest religious group in the world in 2015, making up nearly a third (31%) of Earth’s 7.3 billion people.”<sup>7</sup> To the people of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, Christianity was more than just a religion – it was a way of life, the only way of life. It dictated people’s everyday lives, controlling their actions by controlling their beliefs and thoughts. As the BBC article *Christianity in Britain* states,

You could argue that Christianity had an impact on "every single aspect of every member of the population's lives". Indeed "the Church regulated lives by controlling what people did during the day and what they did in bed".

From the cradle to the grave, and every stage in between, the Church could be your ally or your foe, and ultimately your passport to heaven or hell.<sup>8</sup>

## **The Monarchy: A History**

To trace the rule of England is a long and complex story. Many various Kings and Queens of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds have sat on England’s throne. Prior to the Roman conquest of 43 AD, Celtic kings ruled England. Much is unknown about this time, and a

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<sup>6</sup> Koch, Carl (1994). *The Catholic Church: Journey, Wisdom, and Mission*. Early Middle Ages: St. Mary's Press. ISBN 978-0-88489-298-4.

<sup>7</sup> Hackett, Conrad, and David McClendon. "Christians Remain World's Largest Religious Group, but They Are Declining in Europe." Pew Research Center. April 05, 2017. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>.

<sup>8</sup> Quoting Dr Sarah Foot, in "Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain." BBC. April 27, 2011. Accessed June 04, 2018. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk_1.shtml).

large part of the history of these kings has been attributed to legend.<sup>9</sup> *Britannia* (“Roman Britain”) was under Roman control from 43AD until 410AD. It was under the imperial influence of the Roman Empire that the Catholic Church came to Britain. When Rome left, Christianity remained in the form of a “Celtic Christianity.”<sup>10</sup> The official Roman presence is believed to have left Britain due to pressure from outside invasions, namely that of the Angles, the Saxons, and the Picts. (facts about that here). Anglo-Saxon England existed as a fractured puzzle of smaller Anglo-Saxon (and some Viking) kingdoms until 927AD when it was united as the Kingdom of England by King Aethelstan. While Aethelstan is technically the first king of England, Anglo-Saxon rule was soon to be replaced, as Norman rule came with William the Conqueror’s conquest of England in 1066 AD.

1066AD marks the relevant start of the monarchy of England. Norman rule was especially important because William’s conquest marked rule under a new “foreign power.” 1066 also marked the birth of feudalism in England. Anglo-Saxon culture was very different than Norman culture. In Anglo-Saxon England, men and women were roughly equals, with women able to hold their own claims to land ownership. The importance of land ownership in Anglo-Saxon England changed greatly through the Norman conquest, and the political and

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<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey of Montmouth wrote the largely fictional *Historia Regum Britanniae* (“the History of the Kings of Britain), which told the tale of a legendary King Brutus, who brought refugees from Troy to a remote island to settle and live upon, circa 1100 BC. This island was named “Britain” after Brutus.

Brynley F. Roberts, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 20 (1976): 29-40, accessed June 12, 2018, doi:10.1484/j.nms.3.74.

<sup>10</sup> Although Catholic historians would like to claim otherwise, this was an independent form of Christianity that survived even through the invasion of the German pagan Anglo-Saxons. In fact, it was the Anglo-Saxons who eventually converted to Christianity after the baptism of King Aethelbert in 601 AD by Augustine of Canterbury. For more, read Thomas Charles-Edwards, *After Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

economic system of the Normans saw a huge increase in the disparity of the distribution of wealth. Prior to the conquest, the ownership of land had been widely dispersed throughout the kingdom, with some 2,000 families controlling most of the arable land (exceptions including land owned by the crown and the Church). By 1080 AD there were only 200 major landowners in the kingdom, all but two of whom were foreign by birth.<sup>11</sup> A mere twenty-nine of these landowners were claimed to collectively own “almost half the territorial wealth of England.”<sup>12</sup> This meant that during the Conqueror’s reign not only did the land-owning class of England shrink by 90 percent, but the new landed gentry was established as a group of exclusively foreign men. By 1066 the native peoples of England had already been subjugated to Roman rule and Anglo-Saxon rule. In both cases the ancient and Celtic culture of the native English had merged with the cultures of the settlers, first with the Romano-Latin Romans, and then again with the German-speaking Anglo-Saxons. Scandinavian influence was even prevalent due to the frequent Scandinavian Viking invasions and creation of settlements between 700-1000 AD. England was a melting pot of cultures, and by this point through Anglo-Saxon influence after Latin influence had established a language known as “old-English.”<sup>13</sup> The Normans spoke Anglo-Norman, a variety of Old Norman, the language that would later evolve into French. Until the 14th century, Anglo-Norman and then French were the language of the courts and government. This further separated the people of England from the ruling class.

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<sup>11</sup> See Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *Three Crises in Early English History: Personalities and Politics during the Norman Conquest, the Reign of King John, and the Wars of the Roses* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), 39.

<sup>12</sup> David C. Douglas, *The Norman Achievement: 1050-1100* (London: Collins, 1972), 112, as cited by Michael Van Cleave Alexander.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable, *The History of the English Language* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 158-178.

## **A Feudal System**

William the Conqueror established a system of Feudalism. Simply put, Medieval Feudalism, first developed in France circa the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD, was a structuring of society that revolved around the distribution of land by a lord or king in return for service or labor. “Feudal society” can be broken down into three estates of the realm: the nobility, the peasantry, and the clergy. The most important defining interactions of feudalism exist within the nobility, as another system revolving around the three concepts of lords, vassals, and fiefs.<sup>14</sup> The fief was the central idea behind feudalism. A fief was a heritable property or right granted to a vassal by a lord, in return for a pledge of allegiance and service to the lord. In turn, the lord pledged to “maintain and protect” their vassal. The primary method of maintenance was through the grant of fiefs, although in some cases the vassal lived with the lord as part of the lord’s court. Fiefs ranged in size and stature. Some fiefs were merely plots of land for which a vassal to develop. In the early development of Feudalism, such was a common case, but in the case of England, the Norman institution was more a restructuring of the already-developed plots existing as divisions within England, complete with established wealth, resources, and strongholds.<sup>15</sup> These lands were taxed by both vassal and lord, with wealth accumulating at the top of the feudal system. The clergy in the feudal system were exempt from these taxes, and instead had their own hierarchical system. The clergy was comprised of monks, priests, bishops, and cardinals, with the

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<sup>14</sup> The word “Feudalism” derives from the Latin root *feudum*, meaning fief, or fiefdom. For more information on Feudalism, see Philip Grier’s translation of *Qu’est-ce que la féodalité*, originally written in French by François Luis Ganshof, 1944.

François Louis. Ganshof, *Feudalism.*, trans. Philip Grierson, ed. Frank Merry. Stenton (London, Etc.: Longmans, Green, 1952).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

the Pope presiding over the entirety of the system, as the head of the Catholic church. Within every Catholic country there were many churches. A bishop was the head of his church, and was tasked with running all responsibilities of this church, some of which he shared with the priests. Priests were in charge of many religious ceremonies, including the eucharist<sup>16</sup>, baptizing, witnessing marriages, and burials. Bishops and priests were exempt from taxes, and lived off of the Church's own taxation system. The people in a community would give a *tithe* (a tenth of their wealth) to the church, or risk excommunication. Since Catholicism was the way of life for people living under a feudal system, to be excommunicated was for all intents and purposes to be dead to the world. A bishop had to have been deemed worthy by the Church, having been a priest for at least 5 years, and in possession of some sort of degree or mark of higher education in theology. The role of the Church was important in feudal society, as the Church was responsible for record-keeping and education within the community, besides the religious services they offered. Some people chose to live as monks (the female version being "nuns"), meaning that they gave up any free will and lived their life in dedication of the Church. These men and women lived their lives in a communal complex under the law of the Church, overseen by an abbot.<sup>17</sup> Monks could be ordained as priests, in which case they were named "choir monks," and gave to the Church by singing in the choir, reciting the Divine Office<sup>18</sup> every third hour, and participating in mass. Monks who were not priests and could not read Latin were 'lay brothers,' and

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<sup>16</sup> a service of Christian mass prayer, also called "mass," this was given by a priest or bishop, as the priest or bishop would recite scriptures in Latin.

<sup>17</sup> These complexes, in order of importance within the church, were called abbeys, monasteries, and priories. Nuns could only live in priories, and were headed by a Prior, who was like an Abbot but had less duties towards his/her community. For more, see Carl Koch, *The Catholic Church: Journey, Wisdom, and Mission*, (Winona, MN: Saint Marys Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Also known as the Liturgy of the Hours, together with Mass comprised the Christian worship service. Monks sang psalms and hymns (songs with religious meaning) in celebration of God.

performed their religious service by providing for and maintaining the monastery. All clergymen were celibate, meaning they did not marry or have sexual relations.<sup>19</sup> In the Vatican City, in Rome, sat St. Peter's Basilica, where the Pope resided. This church housed the many Cardinals, who were like the priests of the Church. The main duty of the Cardinals was to elect the bishop of their church, also known as the Pope, who was believed to be able to directly interpret the will of God, and was the supreme power in the Church.<sup>20</sup>

With the complicated system of allegiance between vassal and lord, and the subsequent, often involuntary involvement of the vassal's common peasantry, garrisons, and military men, politics in Europe were complicated matters. Wars within medieval Europe were much like playing a game of chess, consisting of many various pieces and pawns.<sup>21</sup> The attack of one small fiefdom would come to involve all related parties on both sides of the conflict, meaning that rulers and lords were constantly looking to secure new vassals, as well as treaties to ally with other strong powers that have their own network of influence. These treaties were commonly forged through arranged marriages, tying noble bloodlines together. Unfortunately, the mixture of bloodlines often lead to contested lineages, which could have disastrous results. One such

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<sup>19</sup> at least, they weren't supposed to. The clergy was often made fun of and derided for being hypocritical, as in *Piers Plowman*, as they did not always follow the rules set forth by their own scripture which they preached. Such are the complaints of reformists like the ones that followed Martin Luther.

<sup>20</sup> all from Carl Koch, *The Catholic Church: Journey, Wisdom, and Mission*, (Winona, MN: Saint Marys Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps this is why medieval lords and knights were encouraged to play chess. When the Islamic game of *Shatranj* made its way to Europe, forming the base of the game now known today as chess, it was quickly adopted by the nobility, catching on as a courtly pastime. Back then, rules were slightly different, and games usually lasted longer, and revolved more around long-term planning. It was as much a way of developing strategical skill as it was a game. In fact, Peter Alfonsi (born in Islamic Spain circa 1106), in his work *Disciplina Clericalis*, listed chess among the seven skills that a good knight must acquire.

M. G. A. Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270-1380* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 171.

result, in fact, was the Norman Conquest of England.<sup>22</sup> In traditional feudalism, vassals acted independently, having direct authority over the peasants indebted to their service. The common folk, or peasants, provided labor to the vassal in return for protection. In early feudal society, nobility was strongly connected with the military, as vassals pledged their service in war to their lord, and both the lord and vassal pledged to protect the land which the vassal owned. These landowners would have direct judicial influence over the serfs working and living on the land. This system of land-owning was called “manorialism,” and it is arguable to assert that through owning the land that the population lived on, land-owners owned the population. A. Miller, writer for *The Slavonic and East European Review*, states:

government and economic exploitation were so closely connected that whenever proprietary rights or rights of the economic exploitation over a certain territory were conceded to anybody, this was practically always accompanied by the cession of judicial and fiscal rights. In this way the use of immunities became a very ordinary method of government. In addition to these rights resulting from private statutes of the princes, economic and social relations between the landowners and their peasants within the manors also frequently resulted in the establishment of a direct and personal dependency of the peasants upon the landlords.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> William the Conqueror was Edward the Confessor’s 1<sup>st</sup> cousin twice removed. (Edward was the son of Anglo-Saxon king Aethelred the Unready and Queen Emma of Normandy). Edward’s death in 1066 without a clear heir to the throne led to William’s claim to the throne and subsequent invasion of England. Richard Huscroft, *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2009). See also *The Anarchy (1135-1153)*

<sup>23</sup> Miller, A. "Feudalism in England and Russia." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 14, no. 42 (1936): p. 591. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.wpi.edu/stable/4203153> on 12 June, 2018.

## A Law Against Tyranny

The most important document in discussing the art of law in feudal Europe is *Magna Carta*. Established by King John of England in 1215, *Magna Carta* established for the first time the principle that everybody, including the king, was subject to the law. Clause 39 states, "No free man shall be taken or imprisoned or disseised or outlawed or exiled or in any way ruined, nor will we go or send against him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land."<sup>24</sup> To this day *Magna Carta* remains a cornerstone of the British constitution.<sup>25</sup> *Magna Carta* was the English aristocracy's response to the mis-dealings of their king, and the document marks an important shift in the history of the English monarchy and feudal system. King John (r. 1199–1216) was the third King of the Plantagenet line, a line thus far known for their expensive wars.<sup>26</sup> In 1199, John's older brother Richard I died with no direct heir to the throne. The line was disputed between King John and his 15-year-old nephew, Arthur of Brittany. King John is suspected to have murdered Arthur, although all that is known was that Arthur was captured by John, and then disappeared.<sup>27</sup> Already upset at John for the heavy taxation of land-owners in

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<sup>24</sup> *Magna Carta*, 1215, as translated by "The Magna Carta Project," *Magna Carta Project - 1215 Magna Carta*, accessed June 19, 2018, [http://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/read/magna\\_carta\\_1215/Clause\\_39](http://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/read/magna_carta_1215/Clause_39).

<sup>25</sup> Although partially rewritten and with many clauses repealed by modern times, *Magna Carta* still stands as a symbol against potentially tyrannical rulers.

Claire Breay and Julian Harrison, "Magna Carta: An Introduction," The British Library, January 17, 2014, , accessed June 18, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/magna-carta-an-introduction>.

<sup>26</sup> King John's father, King Henry II, was extremely successful. Henry inherited the English throne from his mother, and also came to rule a large collection of lands in France, through inheritance and marriage to the heir, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Henry II had made conquest in Brittany, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The success of Henry, however, had created conflict with the Capetian dynasty ruling in Paris. Ruling after Henry II, King John's elder brother, King Richard I 'the Lionheart' (r. 1189–99) squandered vast resources, first on crusade in the Holy Land, then on the ransom required to buy him out of captivity in Germany. For more, see Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *Three Crises in Early English History: Personalities and Politics during the Norman Conquest, the Reign of King John, and the Wars of the Roses* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), p. 63-92.

<sup>27</sup> "The Origins of Magna Carta," The British Library, February 09, 2015, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/the-origins-of-magna-carta>.

order to fund his families wars, the barons (essentially, low-ranking nobility, or vassals) of Normandy rebelled against King John, and the lands in Normandy were lost. King John was also unpopular with the church. His father Henry II was widely blamed for the murder of St. Thomas Becket, murdered in Canterbury Cathedral 1170.<sup>28</sup> Henry then taxed the clergy, and imposed their own courtiers as bishops. In 1205, King John attempted to follow suit, demanding from the Pope the promotion of John de Gray, the royal favorite. The Pope refused, instead insisting that a man named Stephen Langton be named Archbishop. When John protested, the Pope consecrated him anyway. Infuriated by this, King John declared that anyone who recognized Langton's election would be declared a public enemy. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1207, a royal force ousted the monks at Canterbury as traitors, ordering them to leave the realm, or be burned alive.<sup>29</sup> The Pope's response was to issue the 'Interdict,' banning all religious ceremonies and burials excluding baptisms in England. In 1213, John submitted to the authority of the Pope, accepting Langton as Archbishop. Not only this, but fearful of French invasion, he accepted the overlordship of the Pope, meaning that the Pope took England under the Church's protection, and would be required to respond if England was attacked. Still bitter about his defeats in France, in 1214 King John tried to reclaim the lands of Normandy using a mercenary force, which ultimately failed. All this did was aggravate the barons of England, as their wealth was being drained through taxes put towards fruitless war efforts. Already discontent with John's rule, a party of rebel barons had met with Archbishop Langton and a papal representative to submit their grievances to the king. After the failed conquest, and the refusal by John to meet the

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<sup>28</sup> See Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>29</sup> Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *Three Crises in Early English History: Personalities and Politics during the Norman Conquest, the Reign of King John, and the Wars of the Roses* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), 81.

barons' demands, many barons renounced their allegiance to King John, banding together to capture London and force action from King John. John rejected the idea that his subjects could hold him accountable to his accused faults, as he believed that it was his 'divine right' to rule without question as King. However, he had no choice but to meet the barons' demands, and so on June 15, 1215, Magna Carta was signed. Four days later the barons made their peace with the king and renewed their oaths. Interestingly enough, John had the favor of the Pope in this manner, as he brought the situation to the Pope's awareness. Pope Innocent III saw Magna Carta as a challenge of divine authority, and issued a papal bull annulling the document, describing Magna Carta as 'illegal, unjust, harmful to royal rights and shameful to the English people', and declaring the charter 'null and void of all validity for ever'.<sup>30</sup> In September of 1215, civil war broke out between King John and the barons, but was left unresolved when John died of dysentery on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1216. A revised version was issued under the young Henry III in order to regain the support of the barons. When Henry III turned 18 in 1225, he reissued a new and again revised version. Magna Carta limited the circumstances under which the king could raise taxes without consent of the people. This 1225 version was granted in return for payment of taxes by the whole kingdom, and later led to the first summons of Parliament in 1265, to approve the granting of taxation.

## **The Protestant Reformation**

The true 'protestant' reformation began with a German Catholic bishop, by the name of Martin Luther. On October of 1517, Luther nailed his controversial *95 Theses* to the door of the

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<sup>30</sup> Claire Brey and Julian Harrison, "Magna Carta: An Introduction," The British Library, January 17, 2014, accessed June 18, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/magna-carta-an-introduction>.

castle church in Wittenberg, Germany. This paper provided a detailed list of grievances with the Catholic church. Luther, a devout Christian himself, noticed the sins around him. He was especially critical of his own “sins”.<sup>31</sup> In his quest to gain favor with god, he began to question the means of doing so. ‘What did it take to get one’s soul to heaven?’ In reflecting upon this question, Luther noticed many, many flaws in the Catholic Church. Luther is most famously known for protesting the sale of indulgences. These “indulgences,” were small acts of self-sacrifice that would rectify one’s wrongs and make the journey from purgatory<sup>32</sup> to heaven easier. The idea behind a penitential system of indulgences was sincerely religious, but over time had been corrupted by means of the church leadership to something, in the eyes of many devout bishops – Luther included – that was vile, base, and greedy. Indulgences in Luther’s period were usually offerings to the Catholic Church, in the form of payment – they were taking people’s money in exchange for promising a reduced sentence in purgatory. Money is still given to churches today, so how was this a grievance? Even though Protestant churches still accept donations today, there is a very important distinction : they do not claim to be able to directly influence God’s judgement of a person based on monetary donations. Members donate because they want to donate – generosity is an encouraged Christian value. The churches of today (generally speaking) do not “sell” people packages of holy forgiveness. Not only was it wrong for the Catholic Church to collect the people’s money on false promises, but the Church then

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<sup>31</sup> While actually a devout, pious man, Luther had developed the hysterical idea that he was a man full of evil sin.

<sup>32</sup> Purgatory is the Catholic belief that there exists an in-between (Purgatory) of heaven and hell. According to Catholic scripture, some sins may be forgiven while within an earthly body. However, all sins require some form of temporal punishment as reparations to God. Thus, souls who have not fulfilled this in their bodily form must do so as a spirit in Purgatory. Think of it as a purification process before Heaven, for minor sinners. Catholic believers were told that indulgences may be given that remove part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin, such as an “unhealthy attachment” to sin. Thus indulgences were thought of as a way to “cleanse” the soul. For more, see Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61.

went and spent it on frivolous matters such as the construction of new churches, and the grandification of St. Peter's Basilica. The money that was not spent on the churches ended up lining the monks' pockets.<sup>33</sup> They did not give back to the people or feed the poor with this money, as one ought to expect, given these are core Christian values. Luther believed this was wrong. In his *95 Theses*, thesis 45 states: "Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath."<sup>34</sup> This was Luther's idea on how followers of the Church *should* behave. Perhaps Luther's most clever and destructive statement, however, was Thesis 82:

Why does not the Pope empty purgatory for the sake of most holy love and the supreme need of souls? This would be the most righteous of reasons, if he can redeem innumerable souls for sordid money with which to build a basilica, the most trivial of reasons<sup>35</sup>

Pope Leo X was unable to respond to such a well-framed rhetorical question, but he did respond to Luther: simply put, "shut up." History professor Cameron Addis states,

These ideas obviously didn't sit well with the Catholic Church. When Pope Leo X (born Giovanni Lorenzo de' Medici) issued a bull correcting Luther's views, Luther excommunicated himself before the Church could excommunicate him. By then he was convinced that the Antichrist was acting through the papal throne. He burned the papal bull and renounced his allegiance to the Church at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V of Spain condemned Luther and convicted him of treason but allowed him to escape. The Pope and

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<sup>33</sup> Addis, Cameron, Ph.D. "Protestant Reformation and America." In *History Hub*. Accessed June 3, 2018. <http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/protestant-reformation-america/>.

<sup>34</sup> *Luther, 95 Theses*, taken from "Martin Luther's 95 Theses." Accessed May 22, 2018. <http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

Charles V, who organized and attended the trial at Worms, might have seen fit to follow through and deal with Luther the way the Church had earlier heretics — over the open flame or on the rack — were it not for the threat of Muslim invasion in central Europe.<sup>36</sup>

Originally, Luther did not think of himself as a “Protestant.” In fact, early Protestant leaders called themselves “evangelicals,” desiring a figurative ‘rebirth’ or ‘re-purification’ of the Catholic church, as they believed that the church existed in its purest form before it was adopted into the Roman Empire. Indeed, the Roman Catholic as it evolved to exist in the medieval era was an altered form of Christianity – Christianity had to adopt Roman ideals to survive, such as the adoption of the Roman holiday *Natalis Invicti* – the “birthday” of the Roman sun god.<sup>37</sup> In fact, most early Christians did not even believe in the celebration of birthdays.<sup>38</sup> In discussing an issue of church and state, the first irony forms: Protestants believed that the Catholic Church itself acted too much like a secular authority, and as such was prone to the same flaws--such as greed and the lust for power and wealth). The Protestants wanted a pure Christian church, not a bastardized church-state child of Christianity. However, the Catholic Church’s reaction to Luther made it evident to Luther and his followers that an accord would not be reached – too much reform was needed, and more radical action was required. At the time near the birth of the

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<sup>36</sup> Professor Cameron Addis, Ph.D, teaches at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas. He is the author of an online and semi-interactive textbook, [History Hub](#), which is an American history textbook covering all major occurrences from 1492-2017. In Chapter 4 of his HIST 1301 course, he discusses Christianity and the English Reformation.

Cameron Addis, Ph.D. "Protestant Reformation and America." In *History Hub*. Accessed June 3, 2018.  
<http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/protestant-reformation-america/>.

<sup>37</sup> The Roman sun god, Sol Invictus, was an important Roman deity, (as most celestial, “sky” beings were) and was even featured on many Roman coins. It may be no coincidence that with the attachment/relation of Jesus to sol, Emperor Constantine in particular favored the image of the sun god. The relation of Christ to the sun god, and of his birthday to the celebration of sol, is believed to largely attribute to Christianity’s success spreading among the populace of Rome. For more, see below

<sup>38</sup> Steven Hijmans, "Sol Invictus, the Winter Solstice, and the Origins of Christmas." Accessed June 3, 2018.  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/>

Reformation through Martin Luther, early Protestants did not want to break off from the church – they were merely dissenting Catholics. It was only after Luther saw that the Church would not change that he began to directly challenge the authority of the Pope. Luther was not the first to challenge the authority of the church – names like John Wycliffe (first English translated bible) and the famous *Piers Plowman*<sup>39</sup> had been attacking the church for over a century. The difference between Luther and these previous reformists was 100 years of human progress. Technology, politics, and war arguably played a larger role than religious ideology. The 1500's saw the infancy of capitalism, and as wealthy landowners and tradesman began to educate themselves, literacy rose in the public – outside of the monastery. Luther also had access to the printing press. His idea of *sola fide* (“salvation by faith alone”)<sup>40</sup> and do-it-your-self style of religion caught on, and quickly spread throughout Germany, Spain, and Bohemia, as did the spread of the Bible written in worshippers’ native languages. Other Protestant leaders began to appear, and in some areas the movement took on an even more radical form, the remnants of which can be found in modern Anabaptists.<sup>41</sup> This over-arching campaign against the Catholic was known as the Radical Reformation. Thus sparked the bitter feud between the denominations,

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<sup>39</sup>A popular poetic satire from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century written by a man (believed to be) named William Langland, which criticizes the relation of the people to God within the Catholic Church, addressing for example the concern as to how ordinary people were supposed to access biblical text (which at the time was written entirely in Latin). For more see Lawrence Warner, "Piers Plowman: An Introduction," The British Library, January 26, 2018, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/medieval-literature/articles/piers-plowman-an-introduction>.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Luther believed that, despite being a devout clergyman himself, the church was in many ways unneeded by the public, and that followers of the Christian faith could practice their own religion on their own and connect with God personally rather than through a priest. Essentially, he was cutting out the middle man. *Sola fide* was the idea that salvation with God could be achieved with goodly intentions and profession of faith alone, rather than trivial actions demanded by the Church. For more on this, see Cameron Addis, Ph.D. "Protestant Reformation and America." In *History Hub*. Accessed June 3, 2018. <http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/protestant-reformation-america/>.

<sup>41</sup> Those who believe that a baptism can only occur at adulthood, and with the consent and profession of faith by the Christian person. Modern day examples include Mennonites and the Amish. William Roscoe Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eedrmans, 1984).

which resulted in almost a hundred years of religious wars, culminating in the *30 years war*, involving most of Europe, and especially France, Spain, Germany, and Italy.

## **The State in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century**

While the general system of feudalism still provided the base structure for the economic and political institutions of 16<sup>th</sup> century England, much had changed since the establishment of the monarchy in 1066AD. The separation between the ruling-class and the peasantry was still very distinct, but there was a more even spread of power within the ruling class compared to the time of the first Norman Kings, due to slow, balancing changes over a long period of time, and developments such as the Magna Carta. Power was still centralized around the king, although like in previous feudal systems, local justice was usually dictated by the local nobility or clergy. Henry VII appointed Justices of the Peace across the nation, men (usually local gentry) who oversaw that the law of the land was followed in their appointed regions, serving for 1 year at a time. The overall government of England in the 16th century can best be described as a “mixed” government, with both a monarch and the Parliament, consisting of an upper and lower house (Houses of Lords and Commons). It was actually during the reign of the Tudor dynasty that the modern structure of English Parliament began to form. This is due to the many statutes they passed during the reformation. Although, as later demonstrated by the Tudor dynasty, the power was not nearly equally balanced. The Tudor dynasty was very powerful, ruling with absolute authority, and there were often periods of several years when Parliament did not sit at all. At the time of Henry VII (r. 1485-1509), Parliament only met to grant taxes and pass laws, and during his entire reign only met 7 times, most of which occurred early in his reign (1485-1495). Once

Henry VII felt more secure, he ceased to call Parliament. In this sense, Parliament existed as more of a reactionary response to the will of the King than an independent power of its own, although that does not mean Parliament was without influence. In order to govern laws and taxes, power that Henry VII believed he needed to have control over to be a true king, Henry needed the approval of Parliament. The House of Lords, consisting of clergymen, landed gentry, and other nobility, was easier to control as the king determined the social rise of these men. The House of Commons consisted primarily of rich merchants, tradesmen, and lawyers, and rarely spoke directly with the king. A nobleman later known as “Speaker of the Commons” filled this position, as he was responsible for relaying the decisions of the House of Commons to the King. Parliament was largely under the monarch’s control, and in fact Henry VII even used parliament to pass laws expanding his monarchical powers.<sup>42</sup>

### **King Henry VIII:**

King Henry VIII was one of England’s most well-known kings, partly due to the fact that he ruled over an extremely interesting time period; one where the entire nation it seemed was politically charged and full of religious zeal. The best-known fact about the King, however, was that the man had six wives – quite the anomaly for his time, given the fact that divorce was frowned upon in Catholic Society.<sup>43</sup> While the English Reformation was certainly an interesting period in history, it is not as black-and-white as it looks, nor is it as exciting and easy to

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<sup>42</sup> John Alexander Guy, *Tudor England*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Quite sad that this is what he is remembered by – for as discussed in this paper his actions played a major role in the shaping of English history.

comprehend as seemingly two distinct groups of people, fervidly killing each other in some sort of display of religious extremism. The people living under the rule of King Henry VIII and his children were ordinary people – people who shared a worldview that previously was stable for the last few centuries, only (to the people of England) to be suddenly challenged. While it has been proven that by the 16<sup>th</sup> century critics of the Catholic church had been in existence for some time now, most of the population was still overwhelmingly Catholic. Their lives were still defined by the church and the state.

King Henry VIII was born to the first Tudor King, King Henry VII on 28 June, 1491 at Greenwich palace. He was born the second son to King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. His older brother Arthur was first in line for the throne, but died of tuberculosis before his father, in 1502, thus leaving Henry VIII heir to the throne. When Henry VII died in 1509, Henry VIII decided that he would obtain the papal dispensation necessary to marry his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon.<sup>44</sup> They married on 11 June, 1509, and 12 days later, the couple were crowned. King Henry VII had just established the Tudor dynasty, following the War of the Roses<sup>45</sup>, and there existed living descendants of King Edward IV (1461-1483) that could challenge the claim to the throne. Thus, Henry VIII needed to secure his bloodline with a royal marriage, and

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<sup>44</sup> Papal dispensation is a reserved right of the pope that allows for individuals to be exempted from a specific Canon Law. Since Catherine married Henry's half-brother, there was an *affinity* between them, meaning they were some way related and needed papal approval to marry. It was deemed acceptable for Catherine to remarry, as her first marriage was short lived and ended of natural causes. Additionally, a treaty had previously been signed to arrange the marriage. See: Allison Weir, "The 'great matter'". In *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 143-339.

<sup>45</sup> The war of the Roses was a civil war of sorts from 1455-1485, involving two houses descended from the line of Plantagenets, House of York and House of Lancaster. The war ended when Henry Lancaster defeated Richard III of York, and married Elizabeth of York, to join the houses, settle the feud, and become ruler of England as Henry VII, or Henry Tudor. The Tudor crest was his new symbol, combining the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York. Fun fact: the politics behind this war were what inspired George R. Martin's series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, more commonly known as HBO's TV series [Game of Thrones](#). For more information on the War of the Roses, read Michael A. Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses: 1455 - 1485* (Oxford: Osprey, 2009).

in doing so would legitimize his rule (as he now has “foreign consent/acknowledgement” of his rule) as well as populate his descendants with definitive noble blood.<sup>46</sup> Luckily for him, Catharine of Aragon had “all the influential political connections Henry desired, for she was both the daughter of the powerful Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and the aunt of Charles Hapsburg, future Holy Roman Emperor.”<sup>47</sup>

Henry VIII was known to be someone who pushed boundaries – and not just with the pope. Henry VIII expanded upon royal authority during his reign, often using charges of treason or heresy to silence dissent. He achieved many of his political aims through his ministers<sup>48</sup>, but some who fell out of his favor were banished or executed. In fact, merely two days after his coronation, he ordered the arrest of Sir Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley – his father’s two most unpopular ministers. They were executed in 1510. Between 1510 and 1516, Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon had 5 children. Unfortunately, 3 of them were stillborn. One child, Henry, died just 7 weeks after birth. The only surviving child would be a girl, Mary. Catherine had another stillborn child in 1518. Like most “goodly Christian Kings,” Henry had mistresses. Elizabeth Blount gave birth to Henry’s illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy. Fitzroy was made duke of Richmond in June of 1525, and married Mary Howard in 1533. Historians speculate that he might have been made legitimate, but unfortunately, he died in 1536.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (United States: Paw Prints, 2012), pp 28. Henry VII was only distantly related to any English nobility. His only claim to nobility was that his mother was the granddaughter of the bastard son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and third son of King Edward III. Henry thus had a very tenuous claim to royal blood. His marriage to the heiress of the Plantagenets helped. See also: Guy, *Tudor England*, xiv.

<sup>47</sup> Campbell, Phillip. *The Canon Law of the Henry VIII Divorce Case*.

<sup>48</sup> Such as: Thomas Wolsey, Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, and Thomas Cranmer

<sup>49</sup> At the time of the Duke of Richmond's death in June 1536, Parliament was enacting the Second Succession Act, which could have allowed him to become king. See *The Children of Henry VIII*

## The King's 'Great Matter'

Frustrated with his current wife's seeming inability to produce male heirs – which was the entire point of their marriage – Henry began to take an interest in... other females. Specifically, younger women, seemingly more capable of producing children. During his first marriage, Henry VIII had an affair with one Mary Boleyn, Catherine's lady-in-waiting. Mary had a sister, Anne. Anne was perfect for him – which his court knew – and after she mysteriously became a part of said court, he quickly became enamored with the 25-year-old woman. She resisted his advances, refusing to be his mistress as her sister had. Thus, King Henry VIII, in securing an heir, was given three choices in the matter – what came to be known as the “King's great matter”. He could 1 – legitimize Henry Fitzroy, but such an act would take the Pope's intervention, and would be open to challenge, thus was risky; 2 – Marry off Mary as soon as possible and hope for a grandson before he died<sup>50</sup>; 3 – somehow reject the 40-year-old Catharine and marry someone else of child-bearing age. All the while Henry was growing madly infatuated with Anne Boleyn, as recognizable from the many love letters documented from the king, addressed to his ‘Mistress Anne.’ Henry decided to go with option three, eyeing the possibility of marrying Anne Boleyn. Henry convinced himself that his marriage to Catherine was invalid, as she had previously been married to his half-brother. A devout Catholic himself, Henry justified his reasoning with a passage from the 1506 version of the King James Bible. “If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an impurity; he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be

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<sup>50</sup> Mary was considered unlikely to conceive before Henry's death – life expectancy was short, and King Henry was already 34 years old

childless.”<sup>51</sup> Convinced that his marriage to Catherine was thus false, and justifying her inability to produce a son as punishment from God, Henry sent a messenger to the Pope to request an annulment of his marriage. Here, the first issue of a combined church and state arises when politics mingle with religion. In 1527 the Catholic Church was interconnected with the Holy Roman Empire, lead by Spanish Emperor Charles V. BBC historian Bruce Robinson states, “In 1527 [King Henry VIII] asked Pope Clement VII for a divorce on Scriptural grounds. But unfortunately for both Clement and Henry, Rome was surrounded by the Emperor Charles V of Spain, Catherine's nephew. Unsurprisingly, Charles was unsympathetic to Henry's requests, which meant the Pope had to be as well. Henry had to find another way.”<sup>52</sup> When, in 1529, the Pope recalled Henry’s case to the Vatican, never to be heard again, King Henry blamed his chief advisor and Lord High Chancellor Cardinal Wolsey, who was tasked with arranging the ecclesiastical court in England that Pope Clement’s representative was sent to. Wolsey was charged with *praemunire*,<sup>53</sup> and his fall from grace was “sudden and total”.<sup>54</sup> Although originally just stripped of his title and position of state, upon which Wolsey retreated to the position of Archbishop of York, Wolsey was later recalled to London to face charges of treason. He died due to natural causes along the way. Henry VIII appointed his friend Sir Thomas More as the new High Chancellor, who defended Henry’s position, and denounced Wolsey in court. However, Henry now no longer had a friend in the seat of a Cardinal’s position - he tried multiple times to elect various friends to the position, but all attempts were met with failure. He

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<sup>51</sup> Lev. Chapter 20 Verse 16

<sup>52</sup> There is evidence that Charles V put pressure on the Pope to stall the annulment, but the extent of such is not known. Addis, Cameron, Ph.D. "Protestant Reformation and America." In *History Hub*. Accessed June 3, 2018. <http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/protestant-reformation-america/>.

<sup>53</sup> a 14th-century law that prohibited the assertion or maintenance of any alien jurisdiction, including a claim of papal supremacy, against the supremacy of the monarch.

<sup>54</sup> Elton 1977, pp. 109–111

had little influence over the ecclesiastic court. In his frustration Henry turned to the nation of France, of all things, for aid. France had just gained two new Cardinals in 1530, one of whom was Gabriel de Grammont, bishop of Tarbes, the man who was alleged to have raised the first doubts about the validity of Henry's marriage three years before. Henry hoped that his brother-king Francis I and these two Cardinals would spearhead his campaign for the annulment within Rome. Henry had met Francis I once twelve years prior, and the two young hot-headed kings had formed a sort of friendship. Henry certainly liked Francis better than the dour Charles V. Both were extremely competitive, and respected the other's vigor and ambition. Henry showered Francis in gifts, and made many appearances in his court. Henry cleverly convinced Francis that the two Cardinals could conclude a marriage alliance between Francis' second son and the Pope's niece, Catherine de Medici. However, the marriage would not take place until Henry's annulment was approved. Francis and Henry discussed plans to arrange a meeting between the two monarchs and the Pope. By 1532, it seemed that Henry's luck had turned:

Two illustrious cardinals had finally been acquired, by adoption, to press his cause at Rome. Armed with a draft (from England) of a diatribe against Henry's enemies, they were to supervise the campaign now being fought by Carne and Benet, and lead the assault in Consistory, warning Clement and their fellow-cardinals as they did so that, by virtue of the new empathy between the two monarchs, whatever was done to Henry would be done also to Francis.<sup>55</sup>

In October of 1533, Francis I and Pope Clement VII met in Marseilles. Over the course of the last year, England's position with Rome had been growing steadily worse. Henry, originally excited about the meeting, decided to abstain from attending in person, and planned on sending none other than his trusted servant, the Duke of Norfolk, to attend the meeting on his behalf.

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<sup>55</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Yale University Press, 1997), 307-308.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.wpi.edu/stable/j.ctt1bh4bhn>.

However, Norfolk never reached Marseilles. The meeting was perhaps, too late, as early in the year, rumor had gotten out that Anne Boleyn had conceived a child by Henry VIII. When it was discovered that Anne Boleyn was pregnant, Henry decided to marry her without the Pope's consent in January of 1533. Pope Clement was outraged, and threatened to excommunicate the King unless he revoked his marriage to Anne Boleyn by September, thus Henry could not attend the planned meeting between Francis and Clement. Norfolk was actually the first to hear of the excommunication, and when he informed the king, was ordered back to England. Stephen Gardiner, who had recently been English ambassador to France, was sent to Rome with an appeal to the General Council against Henry's excommunication, a document that Henry had drafted months earlier as a precaution. Henry was fearful that Francis might betray him, and he had actually been planning England's potential separation from Rome for the last 3 years.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interestingly enough, it was potentially possible for Henry to sort out his "great matter" through diplomacy with the Pope. J.J. Scarisbrick, author of *King Henry VIII*, states "The French cardinals had exerted themselves on Henry's behalf at Rome and there was reason to suppose that, at the interview, Clement could even yet have been brought to make concessions. As Francis retorted to Henry's rebukes, if anyone was guilty of ineptitude it was Henry, not he. After first wanting to come to the interview himself, Henry had suddenly changed his mind and sent Norfolk, only to withdraw him at the last minute and instead send Gardiner, who had inexplicably arrived without any powers to negotiate. Since the meeting at Boulogne, Henry had provoked Rome with one outrage after another, but Francis had battled on for his sake. Now, on the very evening when (so he could conveniently say) he came to Clement expecting to bring days of delicate negotiation to a successful conclusion and secure great advantage for Henry, he found Bonner delivering a belligerent broadside against the pope." From J.J. Scarisbrick, *King Henry VIII* (Yale University Press, 1997), 320. There are many speculations as to why Henry may have acted so impetuously, one reason being Anne's stubborn, headstrong, and corrosive behavior, and lack of patience. She made no concessions to Henry, and if he wanted her (which he did VERY badly) he needed her hand in marriage. For more, see Allison Weir, "The 'great matter'". In *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 143-339.

## A Separation of England and Rome

In 1529 Henry had met a man named Thomas Cranmer, who suggested that the issue of Henry's annulment might be one of 'divine law,' and not canonical law, thus needing no intervention of the Pope. Cranmer suggested that should students of the divine in England's colleges decide that the marriage was unjust due to divine reasoning, then the Pope's word would have no meaning. Henry VIII brought the studious revolutionary Cranmer back to his court and ordered him to 'take pains to see my cause furthered according to your device.'<sup>57</sup> At this time, Henry and Anne were still in contact, but already their relationship was looking stormy. Anne even accused Henry of wasting her time, while she could have spent it seeking "some advantageous marriage," and conceived children in the meantime.<sup>58</sup> Anne Boleyn's family were also proponents of Protestant ideas. Anne's talk about reform within the church began to take hold within King Henry's mind, along with the notion of a separation from the weak, alien will of the Pope. Between 1529-1531 Pope Clement VII issued various briefs, such as one in 1530 dictating that Henry would not contract a new marriage before sentence was given (which, despite pressure from Charles V, Clement had not given), and another forbidding anyone to comment on the issue if motivated by unworthy motives or bribes. In December of 1530 Henry was cited to appear in Rome to defend his case, which he ignored. Already having angered Henry, Pope Clement poked the bear in January 1531 by issuing a brief ordering Henry to 'put away one Anne whom he kept about him.'<sup>59</sup> Clement's behavior had lead Henry to lose respect for the authority of the Catholic Church, but it was Thomas Cromwell, former advisor and

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<sup>57</sup> Allison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 209.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Allison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 216.

student-in-law to Cardinal Wolsey, who finally convinced the king of the advantages of severing the Church of England from Rome. After Wolsey's downfall, Cromwell went on to secure a seat in Parliament, as well as become one of King Henry's most trusted advisors. In February of 1531, King Henry VIII stood in Parliament and demanded that the Church of England recognize him to be its 'sole protector and supreme head.' Parliament did not dare defy the King, and on February 11, Archbishop William Warham announced that the clergy were prepared to acknowledge the King as supreme head of the Church of England.<sup>60</sup> From that time on the Pope would be acknowledged as the "Bishop of Rome" and would not receive any jurisdiction in England. However, Chancellor Thomas More was a devout Catholic and was appalled by the oncoming separation.<sup>61</sup> More had an extremely honorable reputation, and his support would have been paramount for support of the annulment within Parliament and the clergy, the former of which had favor with Queen Catherine.<sup>62</sup> When More refused to comment on Henry's desired annulment, Henry had him imprisoned. Catherine herself was against the annulment, and this wore down King Henry, until he eventually ordered Catherine out of his court. The drama within King Henry's court became of interest to the common people, but many supported the Queen. Anne Boleyn on the other hand was despised by the public, even narrowly escaping angry mobs and lynching brigades on a couple occasions. In 1532 Archbishop Warham died, and Henry VIII moved to have him replaced with Thomas Cranmer. The papal bulls to do so were easily acquired, as the diplomat from Rome within England was under orders to please the English to prevent a final separation. Cranmer and the king then worked on establishing the procedures with

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<sup>60</sup> Allison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 221.

<sup>61</sup> You could say that this was not what he had signed up for!

<sup>62</sup> Ironically, the Pope Clement VII had issued a brief forbidding all persons from writing anything 'against their conscience in the great matter' (King Henry's annulment). This was specifically targeted at More, who was against annulment on moral grounds. See *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 216.

which the monarch's marriage would be judged by England's most senior clergy. When Cranmer opened the court and invited Henry and Catherine of Aragon to appear, Catherine did not show. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, 1533 Cranmer declared that the marriage of King Henry and Catherine of Aragon was against the will of God. Five days later, Cranmer validated Henry and Anne Boleyn's marriage, which had occurred in secret in January of that year. The Pope could not intervene, according to The Ecclesiastical Appeals of 1532, an act passed by Parliament in April of 1533. The act, drafted by Thomas Cromwell, stated that England was an Empire and the English crown was thus an Imperial crown, with Henry's historians claiming to trace lineage back to King Brutus and the fall of Troy, and therefore forbade all appeals to the Pope on matters religious or otherwise, making the King the final legal authority on such matters throughout England.<sup>63</sup> The Queen Catherine was from then on referred to by Henry and court as "the Princess Dowager of Wales" (in reference to her previous marriage to Henry's older brother Arthur, when she was Princess of Wales). Henry was actually afraid that Charles V from Spain would attack England, in response to the harm done to his aunt Catherine. Luckily for Henry, in 1533 Spain had enough problems with the Turks, and could not afford to divert their attention.<sup>64</sup>

## **The Royal Supremacy Act of 1534**

Following the marriage, Henry VIII and his advisors instituted a series of reforms securing Henry's position as leader of the church. Their primary concerns were to ensure that Henry's declaration of himself as head of the Church in England, as well as any further reforms,

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<sup>63</sup> 24 Hen. 8 c. 12

<sup>64</sup> Allison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 243.

were accepted by the public. Parliament passed a number of statutes from 1533-1537, the most important of which being the Royal Supremacy Act of 1534. This act granted Henry VIII and all following monarchs “Royal Supremacy,” a title denoting the monarch as the supreme head of the Church of England, also known as *Anglicana Ecclesia*. For England, the King was the new Pope. The wording of the act is important and interesting. It starts by saying that the “king’s Majesty justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England” and furthermore implies that Parliament is passing this act “for corroboration and confirmation thereof.”<sup>65</sup> Just like his father, King Henry VIII makes clever use of Parliament’s authority to validate his right to rulership and expand his powers. This act was immediately followed up by the Succession to the Crown Act,<sup>66</sup> originally known as the “Act Respecting the Oath to Succession.” Previously, in March of 1534, King Henry’s Parliament had passed the Succession to the Crown Act 1533<sup>67</sup> which required all citizens to take an oath recognizing Anne Boleyn as the rightful queen, and all future children between her and the king as rightful heirs to throne.<sup>68</sup> The Succession to the Crown Act reiterated this oath, as well as requiring all citizens to renounce the power of any “foreign authority or potentate,” and any oaths made previously to such an authority.<sup>69</sup> These assertions were backed up with the malevolent threat of the Treasons Act 1534, which, among made it high treason to “do maliciously wish, will or desire by words or writing, or by craft imagine, invent, practise, or attempt any bodily harm to be done or committed to the king's most royal person, the queen's or the heirs apparent, or to deprive them

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<sup>65</sup> 26 Hen. 8 c.1

<sup>66</sup> both acts were passed in November of 1534.

<sup>67</sup> the legal calendar in use at this time dated the beginning of the year as March 25th, thus despite being passed in 1534, the act is considered an act of 1533 in all historical legal documents.

<sup>68</sup> 25 Hen. 8 c. 22

<sup>69</sup> 26 Hen. 8 c. 2

of any of their dignity, title or name of their royal estates, or slanderously and maliciously publish and pronounce, by express writing or words, that the king should be heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel or usurper of the crown.”<sup>70</sup> Essentially, anyone and everyone who questioned the King was at risk of death. Sir Thomas More was still in good standing with King Henry when he resigned from his role as Chancellor in 1532. However, while he respected Parliament’s right to declare Anne Boleyn the Queen of England, he refused to acknowledge the spiritual validity of the king's second marriage. As a devout Roman Catholic, More refused to take the oath of supremacy, and refused to uphold the King’s annulment from Catherine of Aragon. More also refused to sign the 1534 Oath of Succession (Succession to the Crown Act), because the nature of this act now required him to repudiate the authority of the Pope. In a letter to Thomas Cromwell, Archbishop Cranmer states,

I doubt not but you do right well remember, that my Lord of Rochester and Master More were contented to be sworn to the Act of the King's succession, but not to the preamble of the same. What was the cause of their refusal thereof I am uncertain, and they would by no means express the same. Nevertheless it must needs be, either the diminution of the authority of the Bishop of Rome, or else the reprobation of the King's first pretended matrimony. But if they do obstinately persist in their opinions of the preamble, yet meseemeth it should not be refused, if they will be sworn to the very Act of succession: so that they will be sworn to maintain the same against all powers and potentates.

The problem that the Lord of Rochester (John Fisher) and Thomas More had with the preamble was that the preamble required them not just to acknowledge the validity of the King’s marriage

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<sup>70</sup> 26 Hen. 8 c. 13

and supremacy, but to also renounce any belief in papal authority. As Roman Catholics to their core, More and Fisher were unable to do so - they refused to denounce the Pope. In May of 1534 Thomas More was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London on account of high treason. The King kept pressuring More to publicly retract his previous statements on Papal authority, and gave More multiple occasions to change his mind. Then, one day, on June 12, the King's Solicitor Richard Rich visited More in the tower. That day, the two men had a fateful conversation.

[Rich:] "Forasmuch as it is well known, Master More, that you are a man both wise and well-learned as well in the laws of the realm as otherwise, I pray you therefore, sir, let me be so bold as of good will to put unto you this case. Admit there were, sir," quoth he, "an act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for King. Would not you, Master More, take me for King?"

"Yes, sir," quoth Sir Thomas More, "that would I."

"I put case further," quoth Master Rich, "that there were an act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for pope. Would not you then, Master More, take me for pope?"

"For answer, sir," quoth Sir Thomas More, "to your first case, the Parliament may well, Master Rich, meddle with the state of temporal princes. But to make answer to your other cause, I will put you this case: Suppose the Parliament would make a law that God should not be God. Would you then, Master Rich, say that God were not God?"

"No, sir," quoth he, "that would I not, since no Parliament may make any such law."

"No more," said Sir Thomas More, as Master Rich reported him, "could the Parliament make the king supreme head of the Church."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Much of what is known about Thomas More's life comes from the bibliography written by his step-son, William Roper, a source trusted as mostly impartial (as others of the time may not be as kind to Roper, or any enemies of the King). The bibliography accounts the following conversation as such.

More was beheaded along with John Fisher on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1535. He was reported to declare that he died “the king’s good servant, and God’s first.”<sup>72</sup> He was considered to be a martyr along with Fisher, and thus was later sainted by the Catholic church.

## **The Mark of the Reformation**

The Royal Supremacy Act 1534 marks the official beginning of the English reformation. With it came the absolute authority of Henry VIII, woe to them that oppose him. What followed was a period of turmoil. Thomas More was not the only victim of the reformation. For example, John Fisher, the man killed with him, was the prime clerical opponent to Henry’s campaign. As early as 1529, Fisher had warned the House of Lords that moving forward with the acts King Henry was promoting would result in the destruction of the Catholic Church in England. In the periods between 1529 and 1531, Fisher had publicly opposed the king over the divorce, and “rallied churchmen to resist.”<sup>73</sup> In 1530, Fisher and two other bishops appealed to Rome, which later led to the Ecclesiastical Appeals Act of 1532 to prevent this. In 1533, when Parliament was asked to vote on the validity of the divorce, Fisher was the only one to vote against it.<sup>74</sup> In all of these cases, documents accounting the House of Lords find Fisher mysteriously absent any time after he spoke out. Fisher was repeatedly detained, and even a few times jailed. When he

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William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (C. 1556), 48-49, 2003, accessed June 18, 2018,

<https://www.thomasmorestudies.org/docs/Roper.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith, *Thomas More Source Book* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 357.

<sup>73</sup> Fisher wrote down his reasons for his opposition. As a member of the clergy and Parliament, he should have had a right to oppose the King’s actions. However, he never made any public statements in English. His tracts against the King were written purely in Latin, meaning that they were only shared with his peers.

G.W. Bernard, *The King’s Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 111.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard, 114.

refused to take the hint and keep quiet, Henry came to the conclusion that Fisher could not utilize his mouth without a head. By 1532, Henry had achieved the “public submission of the Clergy.” This process began in 1531, when Henry fined the entire English clergy on charge of *praemunire*<sup>75</sup>, and demanded that they submit to an Oath of Supremacy. This statute stated that the Clergy could not make canons (church laws) without the King’s consent.<sup>76</sup> On convocation in 1532, Fisher was unable to attend.

In order to secure his power, Henry had to remove people like Fisher from power. He “purged” the Parliament and the Clergy,<sup>77</sup> killing any who stood in his way. Not only was Henry executing these people merely for opposing him, but he used their own laws to justify it. Even more attempted to avoid this same fate. In 1532, Archbishop Warham had publicly denounced Henry VIII’s tactics in the divorce of Catherine of Aragon, and condemned “all that Henry had done against the liberty of the Church,” yet on the eve of May 15, the Archbishop was “one of three members of the upper house of Convocation” which accepted without any reservation Henry’s demand to surrender, and sign the oath.<sup>78</sup> Cuthbert Tunstal was another example; protesting Henry’s advancements towards his annulment from 1531 onward and even writing his lord a letter in 1533 begging him to “return to the path of righteousness,” Cuthbert snapped,

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<sup>75</sup> a charge of 100,000 pounds!

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<sup>77</sup> As Clergymen, or the “Lords Spiritual,” outnumbered the nobility, or “Lords Temporal” in the House of Lords in Parliament in 1530s, the two institutions were closely related. This would be a problem for Henry, as any Clergymen who might oppose him would have power in Parliament

<sup>78</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*. (Yale University Press, 1997), 329.

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.wpi.edu/stable/j.ctt1bh4bhn>.

when in 1534 Henry gave him the choice between himself and the Tower.<sup>79</sup> He chose to support the King.

According to Foxe, and supplemented by *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1577), King Henry VIII executed somewhere on the number of 7,200 people during his 38-year reign.<sup>80</sup>

## **The Dissolution of The Monasteries**

Now that Henry was the head of both church and state, he had a lot of work to do. J.J. Scarisbrick states, "Suffice it to say that English monasticism was a huge and urgent problem; that radical action, though of precisely what kind was another matter, was both necessary and inevitable, and that a purge of the religious orders was probably regarded as the most obvious task of the new regime—as the first function of a Supreme Head empowered by statute to 'visit, extirp and redress'."<sup>81</sup> Monasteries and monastic living had been criticized for many years now, mainly by Protestant speakers. Scholar and theologian Desiderius Erasmus satirized monasteries as "lax, as comfortably worldly, as wasteful of scarce resources, and as superstitious," and believed it would be better if monks were brought under the rule of bishops. Quite a few bishops during the time of the Reformation had come to believe that "resources expensively deployed on an unceasing round of services by men and women in theory set apart from the world [would] be better spent on endowing grammar schools and university colleges to train men who would then

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<sup>79</sup> Tunstall was suddenly called to London in 1534. Afterwards he turned his opinion around 180 degrees, and professed his support with the King. Historians believe Henry threatened to place him in the prisons in the Tower of London, a place known for torture, dark cells, sentences without limit, and eventually executions. From Scarisbrick, 331.

<sup>80</sup> "Holinshed's Chronicles, 1577," The British Library, November 23, 2015, , accessed June 22, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/holinsheds-chronicles-1577>.

<sup>81</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 337.

serve the laity as parish priests.”<sup>82</sup> In 1534 Henry, along with Cranmer and Cromwell, began to plan the dissolution of the monasteries. Through 1534 and 1535, visitations by Henry’s regime were made to the churches, assessing the wealth of the Church, a responsibility that Cromwell was mainly in charge of. In 1535, Parliament passed the Suppression of Religious Houses Act 1535, which was “An Act whereby all religious houses of monks, canons and nuns which may not dispend manors, lands tenements, and hereditaments above the clear yearly value of £200 are given to the King’s Highness, his heirs and successors, for ever.”<sup>83</sup> This act sparked some rebellions among Roman Catholics, namely that of the Lincolnshire Uprising. It is not known if Henry planned to continue with further dissolutions, but the negative response to his act certainly made him associate monasteries with rebellion. Furthermore, the spread of opinion against “superstitious practices” (such as taking pilgrimages to monasteries or Cathedrals for the worship of Saints) hardened the attitude to religious life. In 1538 a law was passed that “ordered the removal of images ‘for avoiding that most detestable offence of idolatry.’”<sup>84</sup> All of these attacks on monastic living culminated in the Suppression of Religious Houses Act 1539, which was an act demanding the dissolution of all monasteries. The Royal Supremacy Act and Treason Act of 1534 made it high treason to question the king on these matters, such as defying his right to do with “his church” what he will. And according to these acts, any land held by convicts of treason were surrendered to the King. That meant that there was nothing that the people living in these monasteries could do. Those who resisted were subjected to treason, such as the abbots of

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<sup>82</sup> G. W. Bernard, "The Dissolution of the Monasteries," *History*(2011) p 390

<sup>83</sup> 27 Hen. 8 c. 28

<sup>84</sup> “Richard Hooker on the Royal Supremacy, c. 1590.” In Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 381.

Colchester, Glastonbury, and Reading, who were hanged, drawn, and quartered in autumn of 1539.<sup>85</sup>

The dissolution of the monasteries was seen as an attack on Roman Catholicism, however, it is unclear as to whether that was Henry's motivation. Having exhausted much of his treasury in past wars, and his extravagant court lifestyle in his early years, Henry could use the wealth of the monasteries to his advantage, especially for use in systems of law, education, or defense, and given the violent wars that religion was sparking (such as the 30 years war later fought 1618-1648 between Protestant and Roman Catholic nations), defense was something that Henry cared about. Indeed, much of the money taken from the church went towards the construction or improvement of defensive sites along England's coastline.<sup>86</sup> Richard Hooker, English priest and influential theologian, said of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1590, that King Edward VI in 1547 later "justified their dissolution in part because the money could be put to better educational and social uses but in part because they pandered to the 'vain opinions of purgatory and masses satisfactory.' This is not to assert that the desire for land played a minor part in their disappearance. Nor can one be absolutely sure that Protestant notions lurked behind the Dissolution. But it is quite certain that the disappearance of the monasteries was necessary to the growth of Protestantism."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> G. W. Bernard, "The Dissolution of the Monasteries," *History*(2011) p 390-409.

<sup>86</sup> Prior, Charles W. A. "Rethinking Church and State during the English Interregnum." *Historical Research* 87, no. 237 (2013): 444-65. doi:10.1111/1468-2281.12042.

<sup>87</sup> "Richard Hooker on the Royal Supremacy, c. 1590." In Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 381.

## A Graceful Pilgrimage

The largest movement by the people of England in resistance to King Henry's rule occurred in 1536. Originating in Lincolnshire, it is known today as the "Lincolnshire Rising," or larger "Pilgrimage of Grace" and was a result of the discontent that the Northern counties of England felt toward Henry VIII's reformation legislation and attempts to increase government control in the North-- the latter of which was at the suggestion of Minister Thomas Cromwell. Cromwell sent commissioners to dissolve smaller monasteries, which triggered riots starting in the town and abbey of Lincolnshire. The rioters moved to occupy London, with the rebels demanding (1) an end to the dissolution of monasteries, (2) restoration of Papal authority (3) a northern parliament in York or Nottingham, and (4) the punishment of bishops they thought to be "heretical," as well as Cromwell, specifically<sup>88</sup>. Henry refused to negotiate, and thus the first of these movements would collapse. However, by this time a more serious uprising had begun in Yorkshire, and by the time it was taken care of, a group of 30,000 armed men supported the cause. While the rioters clearly had the advantage, Yorkshire's uprising would also prove ineffective, because in response to their list of demands-- which mirrored those of the first rioters, but also included England's return to papal obedience and a further separation between Parliament and the royal family-- they received vague promises, including that of a full pardon from Henry himself, and were dispersed. Between two-hundred and two-hundred and fifty of these insurrectionists were executed, including the leaders who had been promised immunity.

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<sup>88</sup> The rebels actually had 24 demands, including the destruction of all materials "heretical" (Luther), that Mary be made legitimate queen, and demanded that such heretics mentioned should "have condign punishment by fire or such other, or else to try the quarrel with us and our partakers in battle"

Because this pilgrimage received no support from other parts of the country, the small insurrections that did continue to occur were easily suppressed by the government.<sup>89</sup>

### Not Protestant Enough - A Catholic Church Without a Pope

Despite being known as the King that started the English Reformation, it can be argued that Henry did not a 'protestant' view at all. Some said that he died "still at heart a Catholic man." Many of the changes that Protestants envisioned for their new church were not enacted under King Henry. Tithes remained. Monks had to stay celibate. The only thing that did happen was the acquisition of monastery land. In fact, prior to his split from the Church, Henry VI had played a public role in the Protestant reformation of Europe - as a defender of the Catholic Church. In 1521, King Henry wrote *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, ("Defense of the Seven Sacraments") a book defending the Catholic Church against claims made by Martin Luther.<sup>90</sup> The book was enormously influential. Author J.J. Scarisbrick describes it, "one of the most successful pieces of Catholic polemics produced by the first generation of anti-Protestant writers."<sup>91</sup> Pope Leo X rewarded King Henry VIII with the honorable title of Fidei Defensor ("Defender of the Faith"). Despite this fact, Luther's teaching their way into England, even prior to the English Reformation. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* lists many Protestant figures being burned at

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<sup>89</sup> *Britannica School*, s.v. "Pilgrimage of Grace," accessed June 22, 2018, <https://gold.worcester.edu:3683/levels/high/article/Pilgrimage-of-Grace/60023>.

<sup>90</sup> As this was obviously rather embarrassing for Henry later on, Thomas More was actually accused of coercing the King to write it, which More denied. Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 75-76.

<sup>91</sup> *King Henry VIII*, 113.

the stake in England, as early as 1511.<sup>92</sup> Just because King Henry decided to split with the Church, however, did not make him Protestant, as clearly illustrated in the Henrican regime's first attempt at establishing new canon. King Henry, Minister Cromwell, and Archbishop Cranmer had been hard at work trying to define the beliefs of the new Henrican church. After the revolts of 1536 were put down, and the validity of the Church of England was, in their eyes, secure, it was time for them to establish what that meant. The Ten Articles, drafted 1536, was this first attempt. These ten articles were split into two categories, those dealing with doctrines and those dealing with ceremonies:<sup>93</sup>

Articles related to doctrines:

1. That Holy Scriptures and the three Creeds are the basis and summary of a true Christian faith.
2. That baptism conveys remission of sins and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, and is absolutely necessary as well for children as adults.
3. That penance consists of contrition, confession, and reformation, and is necessary to salvation.
4. That the body and blood of Christ are really present in the elements of the eucharist.
5. That justification is remission of sin and reconciliation to God by the merits of Christ; but good works are necessary.

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<sup>92</sup> Often considered one of the most important Protestant sources, Foxe's Book of Martyrs, published 1563, details all of the Christian "Protestant" martyrs up until that time in history. There is a particularly large section on Mary I and her burning of Protestants. It was the second most-read book in Elizabethan England, next to the Bible, which illustrates both the broad spread of Protestantism in 16th century England, and the bias with which Mary I was addressed.

<sup>93</sup> "The Ten Articles, 1536. [Statute; Act -- England Under the Tudors]." The Life of Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604). Accessed June 22, 2018. <http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/tenarticles.htm>.

Articles related to ceremonies:

1. That images are useful as remembrancers, but are not objects of worship.
2. That saints are to be honored as examples of life, and as furthering our prayers.
3. That saints may be invoked as intercessors, and their holydays observed.
4. That ceremonies are to be observed for the sake of their mystical signification, and as conducive to devotion.
5. That prayers for the dead are good and useful, but the efficacy of papal pardon, and of soul-masses offered at certain localities, is negatived.

Unfortunately for Protestants, The Ten Articles recognized three of the former seven sacraments: baptism, eucharist, and penance. Unfortunately for Catholics, the Ten Articles recognized only three of the former seven sacraments. In addition, to the Protestants, Henry's supremacy was in question. Was it some sort of divine right, or was it granted to him through Parliament? Henry and Cranmer seemed to disagree on this. Thus, Henry suffered equal opposition from Protestants and Catholics alike, and dealt with them similarly. For instance, in July of 1540, three paplists and three Protestants were executed on the same day.<sup>94</sup> The most important thing that Henry did for Protestants, was to authorize the Great Bible of 1539, which was the first authorized version of the Bible in English.

According to Pettegree,

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<sup>94</sup> "Henry VIII's Savage Reformation." History Extra. June 05, 2018. Accessed June 22, 2018. <https://www.historyextra.com/period/tudor/henry-viiis-savage-reformation/>.

“Religious changes under Henry were minimal in comparison to those wanted by the reformers wanted but they made a big difference to the individual believer.

Until then the Bible had been in Latin: the priest alone told people what it meant. Suddenly there was to be an English bible in every Church. There would be no more pilgrimages to shrines with hospitality laid on by the Church, no more relying on prayer to the appropriate saint for ailments and grievances.”<sup>95</sup>

The Act of Six Articles, or “An Act Abolishing Diversity in Opinions,” was passed in 1539. This act reasserted the punishment of heresy, and reinstated Catholic values into the Church of England.<sup>96</sup>

### Marital Affairs

On the morning of May 19th, 1536, Anne Boleyn was executed. She had been convicted of high treason. Her offense, for once, had nothing to do with concepts of religion or royal supremacy. She was however, convicted of sleeping around. Speculation remains as to whether these charges were true or not - Thomas Cromwell has been accused of potentially framing her over political disputes, such as what to do with the money collected from the dissolution of the monasteries. It is also suspected that Anne’s previous miscarriage in January of 1536 lead to her downfall, as Henry again began to question the divine rule in regard to his producement of male heirs. What is known, however, is that in the month leading up to her execution, many men from King Henry’s court were questioned, including Sir Henry Norris, a personal body servant and one of his closest friends. One man, a musician named Mark Smeaton, confessed to intercourse with the Queen on three counts. Queen Anne denied this, and it is not known whether the

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<sup>95</sup> "Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain." BBC. April 27, 2011. Accessed June 04, 2018. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk_1.shtml).

<sup>96</sup> 31 Hen. 8 c. 14

confession was sincere or tortured out of Smeaton, but nevertheless the confession was damning. By May 19th all accused members had been executed, and on May 20th Henry betrothed Lady Jane Seymour, one of Anne's handmaidens. They married the following week. A new Act of Succession was drafted which declared Anne and Henry's daughter Elizabeth no longer a legitimate heir, and instead passed that on to any children fostered by King Henry and Lady Seymour. Jane Seymour did have a son, Edward, born on the 12th of October, 1537. She died shortly after due to complications with childbirth.<sup>97</sup>

When King Henry VIII passed away in 1547, his son Edward took over. But before he died, in 1544, a third and last Succession Act was passed, restoring both of his daughters Mary and Elizabeth in line to the throne behind their brother.

## **King Edward VI**

The son of King Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, Edward VI was the first monarch raised Protestant. While King Henry had kept his religious ideas relatively steadfast throughout his reign, Edward VI grew up during the reformation, and as such was more susceptible to the radical ideas being thrown around. The Protestant movement grew much stronger during Edward's 6 year reign. Edward was only 10 years old when his father died. As he was a child, the monarchy was governed by a council of regency led by his uncle Edward Seymour. This regency, along with Edward, were responsible for political and religious reform on a higher level than King Henry's regime.

## **The Western Rebellion**

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<sup>97</sup> J. A. Guy, *The Children of Henry VIII*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Under Edward's regime, many Protestant reforms were passed. The very first thing that Edward's Parliament passed, however, was the Sacrament Act of 1547. This act stated that the sacraments of the bread and wine would remain in worship, and asserted the claim in the belief of the body and spirit of Jesus Christ. During worship, the act said, one was also supposed to kneel.<sup>98</sup> This celebration of the eucharist was a Catholic tradition. However, in 1549, Thomas Cranmer issued a new Book of Common Prayer. The Act of Uniformity 1548, made this new prayer book the common-law prayer book that should be used in England. In this book, Cranmer specified Latin mass as the new English "Supper of the Lord." This new meaning would be divisive. One result was Devon's rebellion in summer of 1549, also known as "The Prayer Book rebellion," or the "Western Rebellion." The Western rebellion started in Cornwall. Here, an archdeacon<sup>99</sup> William Body was disliked for his support of Protestantism. Earlier, in late 1547, when Body started to push through the reforms decided upon by Edward VI's Privy Council<sup>100</sup>, he was attacked by an angry mob. For fear of his life, he fled London. In 1548 Body returned to supervise the destruction of Catholic images within churches. A local priest led a small mob that killed Body. Ten men were hanged for this crime. Then, in 1549, men from Cornwall set up an armed camp. Hearing of the new Act of Uniformity (which was actually passed in early 1549)<sup>101</sup> the men were afraid that it might be enforced in Cornwall. They put up a list of demands, which stated (1) "we will have the general counsel and holy decrees of our forefathers observed, kept and performed, and who so ever shall speak against them, we hold them as heretics," (2) "we will have the Lawes of our Sovereign Lord Kyng Henry the VIII concerning the Six Articles, to

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<sup>98</sup> 1 Edw. 6 c. 1

<sup>99</sup> leader of Clergy

<sup>100</sup> Edward VI had also resumed the defacement of 'idolatry' and the dissolution of Church property.

<sup>101</sup> The act was named "1548" because the calendar in use for law dated the beginning of the year as March 25

be used as they were in his time,” and (3) “we will have the mass in Latin, as was before, and celebrated by the priest without any man or woman communicating with them.”<sup>102</sup> Additional demands related to imagery in Churches, the Sacrament, and ownership of former church and abbey land. These demands greatly angered the Privy Council, and especially Cranmer, who saw the rebels as Catholic heretics. In the summer of 1549 a rebellion formed in Devon - rebels with similar grievances. The Cornwall army had amassed at the town of Bodmin, and from there moved to join with the rebels in Devon. Their slogan was "Kill all the gentlemen and we will have the Six Articles up again, and ceremonies as they were in King Henry's time."<sup>103</sup> The gentry they were referring to had holed themselves up in their castles. Edward Seymour, uncle to the King Edward VI, sent an army lead by Lord John Russell to suppress the revolt. A miniature war ensued, and at one point, the rebels even tried convincing the governor of Exeter to give the city up. After 7 or so battles, the Cornish were defeated, although an estimated 5,500 lives were lost in the rebellion. However, the Lord Protector<sup>104</sup> and Archbishop Cranmer instructed a continuance of the onslaught. Under Sir Anthony Kingston, the English and mercenary forces then moved throughout Devon and into Cornwall, executing many people, before the bloodshed finally ceased.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> "The Western Rebellion." History Learning Site. Accessed June 18, 2018. <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/tudor-england/the-western-rebellion/>.

<sup>103</sup> Poor economic conditions for the lower classes were an additional reason for the rebellion, constituting the army's desire to take down the "gentry"

<sup>104</sup> Edward Seymour

<sup>105</sup> Frances James Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion of 1549.: An Account of the Insurrections in Devonshire and Cornwall against Religious Innovations in the Reign of Edward VI.* (London: Smith, Elder, 1913).

## Evolution of the Church

With the new Book of Prayer, and the further dissolution of the churches, the Protestant reformation was on its way. Edward VI was revered as a goodly and holy King, and many English citizens regularly alluded to him as godly. During his rule, the Protestant movement started to take hold of its own accord. Author Walter Lynne wrote a book called *The beginning and endynge of all popery*, which in it claimed that Satan had a central role in the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. Lynne's book "explained how the bishops of Rome left Christ and sought the 'secular power', and it examined this power in the context of the Tudor experience. It celebrated the part Henry VIII had played – and Edward VI would play – in leading England out of darkness."<sup>106</sup> Lynne dedicated this book to Cranmer, who himself had likened the Pope to the antichrist.

In reference to Edward's rule, BBC Historian Professor Andrew Pettegree puts it,

"He changed the ritual of the mass and abolished the sacraments of penance and the last rites of the dead. He declared that Purgatory no longer existed and prayers for the dead were written off as useless; God alone decided whether you were saved or damned. Churches were stripped of their artefacts and priests no longer had to be celibate.

By the end of Edward's reign the Reformation was much more than political: it felt personal since it cut so deeply into people's habits and beliefs. Dissent was punishable by death."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Stephen Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 104. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/worcesteruniv-ebooks/detail.action?docID=201924>.

<sup>107</sup> "Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain." BBC. April 27, 2011. Accessed June 04, 2018. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk_1.shtml).

## Sister Dearest

King Edward VI was a Protestant at heart, and he desired all of England to be as well - that included his family. In 1549 King Edward had written to his sister Mary, asking her to use his new Book of Common Prayer in her own household. By 1551 King Edward wanted his sister to fully conform and declare herself protestant. In 1551, Mary responded to a letter that Edward had sent, and a group of men including Lord Richard Rich had reported Mary's response to the privy council. In response to Edward's insistence that she quit her Catholic Mass and use the Protestant prayer book, Rich reported Mary's response, "as for my priests, they know what they have to do, the pain of your laws is but imprisonment for a short time, and If they will refuse to say Mass for fear of that imprisonment, they may do herein as they will: but none of your own Service (said she) shall be used in my house."<sup>108</sup> Mary flatly refused to comply. In her response, she also criticized Edward for pressing his Protestant reforms before even becoming of age, stating that "although the good sweet king have more knowledge than any other of his years, yet is it not possible that he can be a judge in these things," and that once Edward was older, then she might comply to listen to him. To this, Edward IV, fearing Mary would reinstate Catholicism, excluded both his half-sisters from his will to prevent Mary from becoming queen.

<sup>109</sup> He named Lady Jane Grey, the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister Mary, queen after him.

Edward VI died before ever becoming of age.

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<sup>108</sup>“Report to the Privy Council of the delivery of their message to Princess Mary by [Lord Rich], Lord Chancellor, [Sir Anthony Wingfield], comptroller of the household and Sir William Petre, Secretary”, 29 August 1551 (SP10/13/35, f.71r-71v), accessed from

The National Archives. "Mary Writes to Edward VI." The National Archives. June 16, 2017. Accessed June 22, 2018.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-english-reformation-c1527-1590/mary-writes-to-edward-vi/>.

<sup>109</sup> Edward VI was very sick

## **Queen Mary I**

Mary was the daughter of King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. After the death of her brother, the throne was contested. Due to the Succession Acts, both her and her half-sister Elizabeth were once again rightful heirs to the throne. Edward had named Jane Grey next in line, but Mary contested this. Just before Edward's death, Mary was summoned to London. She was warned, however that Edward was going to capture her. She fled to East Anglia, where Lady Jane Grey's father-in-law Dudley had put down Kett's rebellion, and wrote to the privy council declaring herself as Edward's true successor. Upon her brother's death Dudley declared Jane Grey Queen, but Mary gathered her Catholic supporters and assembled a military force at Framlingham Castle, Suffolk. As her support grew, Dudley's waned, until on July 19, 1553, sympathizers of Queen Mary (and those fearful of her attack) had Dudley and Jane imprisoned in the Tower of London. Mary rode triumphantly into London on August 3, 1553. She quickly moved to nullify her opposition: Dudley was executed, Lady Jane Grey and her husband were kept on guard in the tower, and her half-sister Elizabeth was kept under house arrest. To solidify her place as ruler she married a Spanish King, King Philip II of Spain, which at the time was a Catholic country.<sup>110</sup> This led to Wyatt's rebellion of 1554, in which a group of rebels planned to overthrow Mary and replace her with Elizabeth. The rebellion, led by Thomas Wyatt, failed, resulting in the executions of Lady Jane Grey, Thomas Wyatt, and about 90 other rebels.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Linda R. Porter, *Mary Tudor: The First Queen* (London: Piatkus, 2009).

<sup>111</sup> "Wyatt Rebellion 1554." Glastonbury Abbey. Accessed June 22, 2018.  
[http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Documents/Wyatt\\_Rebellion.htm](http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Documents/Wyatt_Rebellion.htm).

## Bloody Mary

Due to Foxe's recountment of her burning 300 protestants at the stake, she is nicknamed "Blood Mary," even though her father had killed numerous more people. The only difference here was that Mary exclusively persecuted Protestants. Upon her rise to the throne, Mary claimed that she would not compel any of her subjects to follow her religion, but within a few months, the leading Protestant churchmen - including Thomas Cranmer - were imprisoned. She then convened her Parliament, and under the First Statute of Repeal, passed in 1553, nullified all religious legislation passed under the previous monarch, her brother Edward VI.<sup>112</sup>

Mary had always been closer to her mother Catherine, and as such rejected the annulment and the separation from Rome. While she wanted to return to Catholicism, it would not be easy. Mary and Philip were able to convince Parliament to repeal her brother's laws, but she had to make the concession that the monastery lands claimed under King Henry's rule were to stay under rule of their new owners.<sup>113</sup> Working together with Pope Julius III, Mary tried to repair England's relationship with the Catholic Church. With the Heresy Acts restored,<sup>114</sup> Mary began executing Protestants. Starting in February 1555, these executions became known as the "Marian persecutions." Over 800 Protestants fled<sup>115</sup>, including Foxe, to live in exile outside of England, moving to countries such as France, Germany, and the Dutch Kingdom.<sup>116</sup> Thomas Cranmer,

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<sup>112</sup> David Michael Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553-58*. (London: Longman, 1995), 207-208.

<sup>113</sup> some of which included members of the Parliament

<sup>114</sup> Loades, 235-242.

<sup>115</sup> only those wealthy enough who could afford to

<sup>116</sup> Maureen Waller, *Sovereign Ladies: The Six Reigning Queens of England*. (New York: St. Martins Press, 2007), 113.

imprisoned at the Tower of London, was forced to watch his fellow bishops burned at the stake. Cranmer recanted his Protestant faith, which under the Heresy Acts made him a repenenant.<sup>117</sup> Queen Mary did not care. On the day of his burning, he dramatically withdrew his recantation, exclaiming,

And now I come to the great thing which so much troubleth my conscience ... and that is setting abroad of a writing contrary to the truth; which now here I renounce and refuse as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life if it might be. And that is all such bills and papers which I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation, wherein I have written many things untrue ... And as for the Pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy and Antichrist, with all his false doctrine.<sup>118</sup>

With that, he claimed that the only thing he needed to repent for was his original recantation, and as it was his right hand that did the recanting, then his right hand should be punished first. With that, he stuck it into the flames.

The burnings were so unpopular that even one of Philip II's staff, Alfonso de Castro, a devout Catholic, condemned them, and another advisor warned that it could start a revolt.<sup>119</sup> Suffice to say that Mary I was a very unpopular Queen, but what she did illustrate was the depth of the religious divide in England. History professor Cameron Addis, Ph.D, states,

By then, the problems with England's Anglican Church were apparent. Nearly everyone on either side of the Catholic-Protestant divide was unhappy with the ambiguity of the new church, and both groups ended up feeling the brunt of persecution at one point or another as Henry's children vacillated back and forth along the theological spectrum. The respective zealotries of Protestant Edward VI and Catholic Mary could squelch debate by force in the short run, but only

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<sup>117</sup> subject to other punishment and had redeem himself in the eyes of the Church, but not subject to death

<sup>118</sup> Maurice Elliott, "Cranmer's Attitude to the Papacy: 'And as for the Pope, I Refuse Him as Christ's Enemy'," *Churchman* 109, no. 2 (1995): accessed June 21, 2018, [http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman\\_109\\_2\\_Elliott.pdf](http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman_109_2_Elliott.pdf).

<sup>119</sup> Waller, 102-103.

fueled free thinking about religion in the long run. Catholics resented the break with Rome, while Protestants viewed the “pseudo-Catholic” Anglican Church as reformed in name only. The Anglican Church retained Catholic vestiges such as a leader (the king or queen) and bishops and the traditional rituals and liturgy — what Protestants derisively called the “smells and bells.” Old habits die hard. When protestors said that “only 80 miles separated the new church from Catholicism,” they meant that the short geographical distance from Dover, England to Calais, France mirrored the superficial differences between the Anglican and Catholic faiths. They didn’t take down paintings. They still celebrated Christmas. Mainly the seat of power had just shifted from the Vatican to London.<sup>120</sup>

After the death of Thomas Cranmer, Mary appointed Reginald Pole, English Cardinal of the Catholic Church, Archbishop of Canterbury.

## **Elizabeth I**

Mary I died from ovarian cancer on November 17, 1558. She had no children, only multiple false pregnancies. Ironically, Reginald Pole died from an influenza epidemic that same day.<sup>121</sup> She was succeeded by her half-sister, Elizabeth I. Elizabeth, born daughter of King Henry and the wild and infamous Anne Boleyn on September 7, 1533, ascended to the throne in the year 1558. Elizabeth decided that she, unlike her previous ruling family members, would not rule by herself, with absolute authority. In her first speech as Queen, she said “I mean to direct all my actions by good advice and counsel.”<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth never married, and she soon became known as the “Virgin Queen.” Her rule of 40 years was a needed relief of stabilization to the people of England, who had just suffered through the turmoil of the Tudor Dynasty.

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<sup>120</sup> Addis, Cameron, Ph.D. "Protestant Reformation and America." In *History Hub*. Accessed June 3, 2018. <http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/protestant-reformation-america/>.

<sup>121</sup> Waller, 108.

<sup>122</sup> Loades, 35.

One of her first actions as Queen was to reinstate the Church of England as officially Protestant. Her actions to repair the religious divisions made in the reign of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I were known as the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, which was set out in two acts. First, the Act of Supremacy 1558 re-established the Church of England's independence from Rome, and Elizabeth being given the title "Supreme Governor of the Church of England." This new title signified exactly that: titular leadership over the Church of England, but she did not claim to have absolute authority as her father did. The second act was the Act of Uniformity 1559, which outlined what form the English Church should take. According to the act, the order of prayer to be used was the English Common Book of Prayer. All persons were required to go to Church once a week or be fined 12 pence.<sup>123</sup> Further refusal to participate in Anglican religious activity would incur increasing penalties, such as property loss or imprisonment. These laws applied to Roman Catholics, called "recusants," and while Elizabeth's system of punishment was much more moderate than her predecessors', there were some cases where those adhering to Catholicism faced capital punishment. Fourteen bishops were dismissed from their sees,<sup>124</sup> leaving all but one vacant. New bishops were appointed, replacing the Catholic ones under Mary I. A man by the name of Matthew Parker was consecrated the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Elizabeth also reinstated the Treason Act.

In 1570 Pope Pius V issued the Papal Bull *Regnans in Excelsis*, which said "Moreover we declare her [Elizabeth] to be deprived of her pretended right to the aforesaid realm. and from all dominion. dignity and privilege whatsoever."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> 1 Eliz. 1 c. 2

<sup>124</sup> positions

<sup>125</sup> Werrell, Ralph S. *Church and State in Reformation England*. Stowmarket. Accessed June 1, 2018. [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1966-4\\_219.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1966-4_219.pdf).

The Elizabethan era was not without its faults. Under Elizabeth's rule, the Treason Act was reinstated, meaning that she did have authority to put down those who might oppose her. There were still heretics and extremists, and martyrs both Protestant and Catholic; these just occurred on a less extreme a frequent basis. One such martyr was Mary, Queen of Scots.

### Mary Queen of Scots

Mary Stuart was born in 1542 and became queen of Scotland at only 6 days old upon the death of her father. Through her grandmother, Margaret Tudor, Mary had the strongest claim to the throne of England after the children of Henry VIII, which when combined with her Roman Catholic faith, made her a threat to Elizabeth I. She was raised in the French royal court and would marry a French dauphin, Francis II. After Francis' untimely death, Mary would return to Scotland, where she would marry her English Catholic cousin, Henry Stuart (Lord Darnley), who was a descendant of Margaret Tudor-- which enforced Mary's claim to the throne for after Queen Elizabeth died. A devout Catholic herself, Mary refused to allow the infringement upon many of the rights of Catholic worshippers, refusing to implement compulsory attendance at Protestant services and refused to stop holding Mass in her own chapel.<sup>126</sup> After a series of scandals, including the death of her husband and her subsequent marriage to the man suspected of murdering him, public opinion would turn against Mary and she would be forced to abdicate her throne and flee to England.

The religious turmoil in Europe would culminate in the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587. Since Mary believed that she was the rightful successor to the English throne after

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<sup>126</sup> "Mary Queen of Scots." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 7th ed. Columbia University Press, 2017.

Elizabeth's death and was soon found to be central to several Catholic plots to overthrow the English queen, she represented a significant danger to Elizabeth's rule. While Elizabeth did originally reject petitions to execute Mary for the nineteen years she held Mary on "house arrest", she eventually realized that the Catholic threat to her was too great. For this reason, Mary was brought to trial and sentenced to death for treason. This is representative of a significant amount of religious strife: while Queen Mary had been forced to abdicate her throne in Scotland, she was still nobility and a former leader of a powerful European nation with a valid claim to the English throne. Mary believed that she was executed for her loyalty to the Catholic faith rather than for her treason, claiming that "The Catholic faith" and her maintenance of her "God-given" right to the English crown were the reasons she was condemned, as was evidenced in a letter she wrote to her former brother in law, King Henry III-- the last letter she would write.<sup>127</sup> Mary stayed loyal to Catholicism throughout the end of her life, as was famously recorded by Robert Wynkfielde, a spectator to the execution<sup>128</sup>. The former Scottish queen arrived with two maidservants, who were praying and "continually crossing themselves". Mary herself wore her crucifix for as long as she could and prayed, reciting psalms in Latin right up until her final moments. The grace with which Mary handled herself at her execution contributed to the way that the people of Europe remembered her: the scandals of her lifetime were forgotten, and thus the people grieved her as a Catholic martyr.

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<sup>127</sup> Hanson, Marilee. "Mary Queen Of Scots Last Letter"  
<https://englishhistory.net/tudor/mary-queen-scots-last-letter/>, February 10, 2015

<sup>128</sup> Hanson, Marilee. "The Execution & Death Of Mary, Queen of Scots, 1587"  
<https://englishhistory.net/tudor/execution-mary-queen-of-scots/>, February 9, 2015

## The End of an Era

As Elizabeth was a virgin, she had direct heir to the throne. Thus, on her death in 1603, her cousin James VI of Scotland succeeded her. Elizabeth I was the last monarch in the line of the Tudor dynasty. Her rule also saw the end of what in the short term, can be called the “English Reformation,” although effects of the recent events would still have impacts for years to come. If her mother Anne Boleyn had started it, Elizabeth I ended it.

Pettegree puts it,

By the end of Elizabeth's reign a stunning transformation had occurred. There was no single clever tactic that achieved this, merely the passing of time. By now, the majority of the population had only known Protestantism because the generation baptised into Catholicism had died. For the first time the majority of the nation felt Protestant. To be Protestant was to be English and those stubbornly remaining Catholic were traitors. Elizabeth refused to abolish bishops - disappointing the more extreme Protestants, the Puritans, but keeping the vast moderate majority on side. The balancing act was maintained by her successor, James I.

The King James Bible defines the nation and encapsulates its religion. The Protestant propaganda machine had finally won the battle, with its religious catechism uniquely and brilliantly pitched at each social and intellectual stratum. From school children to soldiers, each citizen was expected to know the core Protestant doctrines, to read from its custom designed text. The old religion had by and large been flushed out and the new one successfully implanted. The Reformation has been sold to the English and it looked like nothing could challenge it.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> "Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain." BBC. April 27, 2011. Accessed June 04, 2018.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk_1.shtml).

## **Conclusion**

Since the merging of the Christian religion with the Roman Empire and the birth of the Catholic Church in 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, religion<sup>130</sup> and authority have been intertwined. In 16th century England the monarch and the Catholic church were enormously powerful and influential. Together, the church and the state governed the lives of the people – the state on the large scale, dealing with laws and politics, wars and economics, and the church on the small scale, dealing with belief systems and personal values. Neither the church nor the state were perfect. In fact, Martin Luther and the Protestant reformists very interestingly believed that the Catholic Church acted too much like a secular power, and that many of its flaws were due to its existence as a state-like authority. However, the ability to exercise such power was exactly what kept actual state authorities within the kingdoms of Europe in check. So together, albeit while providing a very strict and structured environment to live in, the church and state worked to balance each other out. Ultimately, a combined church and state, with one ruler having supreme authority over every aspect of a citizen's life, did not work. That was too much power to give one person. By the time of King Henry VIII, it was already evident that a monarch who became too powerful was dangerous, as was further illustrated by King John and his forced signing of the Magna Carta. In fact, at his trial, Thomas More even used the Magna Carta as an argument against the tyranny of King Henry, arguing that the Act of Supremacy 1534 was contrary to the edicts of Magna Carta, and thus void according to both Church laws and English laws.<sup>131</sup> Interestingly

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<sup>130</sup> By the term “religion”, we are talking specifically about Christianity in this context, although there is a lot of evidence to support that prehistoric cultures followed spiritual leaders as well, which would have been some form of religion/state mixture, albeit on a much smaller scale.

<sup>131</sup> Henry Ansgar Kelly, Louis W. Karlin, and Gerard Wegemer, *Thomas More's Trial by Jury: A Procedural and Legal Review With a Collection of Documents* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), xiv-xvi.

again, in the case of King John, England's relation with the Church had interfered with John's ability to concede to the barons' wishes, due to the Pope's interpretation of it as an attack on divine authority. The concept of 'divine right,' where kings were granted the right to rule by God, was dangerous, but kept in check by the monarch's duty to exemplify Christian behavior and maintain a system of good morals. While religion and state were separate, the Catholic Church attempted to exist in harmony with the many Christian leaders of European kingdoms. "The Christian was taught that he was also a member of the State, and the Prince that he had a responsibility to the Church."<sup>132</sup> When King Henry made himself supreme ruler of England, he removed this system of balance, leaving him unchecked and able to justify his behavior as he saw fit. King Henry VIII was able to rule with an iron fist, and people were terrified of speaking out against him, for fear of suffering the same fate as those such as Sir Thomas More. Fisher wrote, "for kings usually think that they able to do whatever pleases them, because of the magnitude of their power. Therefore it is good for these kings, in my opinion, to submit themselves to the decrees of the church, and this is beyond doubt to be praised in them, lest otherwise they kick over the traces and do what they please, as long as they can weave together some appearance and colour of right."<sup>133</sup> The issue during King Henry's rulership was more a problem of this absolute authority, due to the King's abuse of his power, but as the crown passed to Edward, to Mary, and Elizabeth, the ripple effects of what King Henry had started began to come to light; during King Henry's rule, King Henry's opinion was all that mattered, but as Catholicism was cast out of England and allowed the free thought of Protestantism within the nation, a deeper rift occurred. Under King Edward VI's rule, the protestant revolution took a

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<sup>132</sup> Ralph Werrell, *Church and State in Reformation England*.

<sup>133</sup> John Fisher, as quoted by G. W. Bernard, *The Kings Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 103-104.

deeper hold in England, as the 'great matter' turned into more of a religious uprising. Under Edward's rule, Catholics were persecuted. Under Mary's rule, Protestants were persecuted. Under Elizabeth's rule, the nation was able to settle into a calmer state, but it was also during her rule that many Catholics were drawn and quartered, and Protestantism took hold for the longer term. Catholicism was arguably still persecuted in England up until the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, which allowed members of the Catholic Church to sit in Parliament.<sup>134</sup> Effects of this religious divide can be seen even hundreds of years after King Henry's split with the Catholic Church in 1534.

### An Explosive Chain Reaction

One such effect was the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. A group of Catholics, most infamously Guy Fawkes, plotted to assassinate King James I of England by renting a house beneath the Houses of Parliament and storing dozens of barrels of gunpowder into the cellar of the House of Lords. This plot only failed last minute, when guards checked the cellars and found Fawkes preparing to set off the fuse that would have resulted in a massive explosion and would have killed not only King James, but also the members of both houses of Parliament.

The causes of the Gunpowder Plot are still hotly debated, but one is clear: Catholics had expected King James to be tolerant of them and instead, he had done the opposite-- further persecuting them and even ordering that many leave England. While the conspirators might have had multiple motives and may have differed in some of those, there are two things they all

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<sup>134</sup> 10 Geo. 4 c. 7

shared-- their “militant Catholicism”<sup>135</sup> and a resentment of King James for the way their people had been treated by the State. Thus, the Gunpowder Plot was a clear result of the religious reformations that had been rippling through Europe.

### The State vs. The State

The English Civil War was the result of a rift between Charles I and Parliament that had worsened during not only King James I but Charles himself, making the mid-seventeenth century one of the most turbulent periods in the country’s history. These conflicts would lead to the execution of the King in 1643, an incredibly radical act for the time that would have its own lasting impacts, and the establishment of Oliver Cromwell’s Protectorate in 1653.<sup>136</sup>

The idea of the English Civil War being a war of religion can be illustrated by how inextricable politics and religion truly were, as is evidenced in an article written by Glenn Burgess. Burgess argues that the war did have religious causes, even when the arguments about religion were deflected constitutionally. For instance, the Puritan clergy defended the Parliament with clear religious motives, but refused to defend themselves on religious grounds for they felt that religious war was “un-Christian” and that religion “in and for itself could not be defended by force”, meaning that while they used law and politics to defend themselves, their purpose was unquestionably religious.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> NICHOLLS, MARK. "STRATEGY AND MOTIVATION IN THE GUNPOWDER PLOT." *The Historical Journal* 50.4 (2007): 787-807. *ProQuest*. Web. 22 June 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Civil war, English (1642 - 1651). (2003). In *The MacMillan encyclopedia* (2nd ed.). Aylesbury, UK: Market House Books Ltd.

<sup>137</sup> Burgess, Glenn. "Was the English Civil War a War of Religion? The Evidence of Political Propaganda." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1998): 173-201. doi:10.2307/3817797.

This raises the question of what we can consider to be causes of a war. “Motives” in and of themselves are causes, and this is no difference as it relates to war. While one can easily use other means to justify their true intentions, it does not change what those intentions are. Meaning, using Constitutional means to justify a religiously motivated war does not make the war itself any less religious.

## A New world

It is also very probable that the religious tension in England was the cause of the multiple emigrations that took place in the 17th century. On the extreme wing of the Puritans existed the Separatists. While the Puritans wanted to purify the Church of England by removing Catholic elements, the Separatists wanted to be done with the whole system. They believed in the idea of a “gathered church,” or a church governed only by the Holy Spirit, not the Church<sup>138</sup> nor the state. Separatists believed that Christian believers could seek out other Christians and form their own churches, and that these different churches (or “congregations”) could determine their own affairs, without having to submit to any higher human authority.<sup>139</sup> One such man was William Bradford. Bradford is best known as a signatory to the Mayflower Compact<sup>140</sup> and as governor to the Plymouth Colony in what is now the commonwealth of Massachusetts, USA, between the years of 1620-1657. He wrote his journal *Of Plymouth Plantation*, which covered the years from 1620 to 1657 in Plymouth. Bradford, along with many of the other founding members of Plymouth colony, were fleeing persecution in England, from King James I. Born in Austerfield,

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<sup>138</sup> The Catholic Church, governed by the Pope

<sup>139</sup> From Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Separatist." Encyclopædia Britannica. February 03, 2016. Accessed June 20, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Separatists>.

<sup>140</sup> the first governing document of Plymouth colony, formed by the male passengers on board the Mayflower, which famously transported the first Pilgrims (English Puritans) from Plymouth, England, to the New World, in 1620.

West Riding of Yorkshire, Bradford quickly grew attached to the Puritan movement. At age 12, a friend had invited him to hear the Reverend Richard Clyfton, a famous Puritan, preach at the All Saints' Church in Babworth. Bradford was inspired, and began to talk to one William Brewster (later a fellow *Mayflower* passenger), who lived in Scrooby manor only four miles from Austerfield. When King James I came to the throne in 1603, the King declared that he would "put an end to Church reform movements."<sup>141</sup> Given the events of the past 50 years, reformists would have known that to criticize the Church would, at its worst, mean treason, and death. By 1607 secret meetings were being held at Scrooby Manor. Led by Clyfton, this small group of reform-minded individuals decided that reform of the Church of England was hopeless, and that they should sever all ties with the Church. This ideology later became known as "Separatist," meaning wanting to separate from the English Church. In 1607, Bradford and the early Separatists' meetings had attracted the attention of the Archbishop of York, and the group was arrested. Many were imprisoned or fined, or watched "night and day" by those loyal to the archbishop.<sup>142</sup> In the summer of 1608, 18-year-old Bradford and the Separatists escaped to the city of Leiden, in the Dutch Republic. There, they could practice religious freedom. While the Separatists could practice their religion freely in Leiden, they were also troubled by the fact that their children were being influenced by Dutch customs and language. By 1617, the Separatists had decided to plan a journey to the Americas. John Carver, writer of the Mayflower Compact, made the necessary arrangements in 1620, and approximately 50 Separatists departed the Dutch

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<sup>141</sup> Gary D. Schmidt, *William Bradford: Plymouth's Faithful Pilgrim*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2002), 12.

See also: Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims, Travellers and Sojourners Leiden and the Foundations of Plymouth Plantation*. (Plymouth, MA: General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 2013).

<sup>142</sup> Schmidt, 17.

Republic on board the *Speedwell*.<sup>143</sup> According to these arrangements, the *Speedwell* was supposed to meet with the *Mayflower* off the coast of England and sail together to the colony of Virginia. However, the *Speedwell* was determined unable to make the journey, and many passengers were transferred on board the *Mayflower*. Together with about 50 colonists who had been recruited by the Merchant Adventurers<sup>144</sup> for their various vocational skills, the Scrooby congregation sailed for the new world, and due a storm blowing them off course, landed north of their destination, and established the now-infamous settlement of Plymouth, Massachusetts.<sup>145</sup>

When the nation of The United States of America was founded in 1776, by the English settlers living in the former colonies, it was founded on such ideals as ‘Freedom of Religion’ and ‘Separation of Church and State.’<sup>146</sup> These are the exact concepts that England was struggling with during the English Reformation. An analysis of Thomas More in the context of this matter provides the perfect example. Throughout most of their relationship, Sir Thomas More and King Henry VIII had a mostly amicable relationship, as evident in the many times that King Henry seemed to give More a “second chance.”<sup>147</sup> Before becoming Lord Chancellor, Thomas More was a scholar in many matters, including theology. William Roper, More’s step-son, said that More liked to discuss such matters with the King, and was often invited to dinner with Henry and

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<sup>143</sup> Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower: a Story of Courage, Community, and War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 23.

<sup>144</sup> the London guild responsible for chartering the voyage of the *Mayflower*

<sup>145</sup> For Bradford’s account, see William Bradford, *History of Plimouth Plantation: From the Original Manuscript* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books, 2010).

<sup>146</sup> The first state of this phrase is traced to a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote January 1, 1802, which stated “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.” Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Danbury Baptist association in the state of Connecticut, taken from "Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists The Final Letter, as Sent," Library of Congress, , accessed June 21, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>.

<sup>147</sup> While some sources disagree whether or not it was reciprocated, historians agree that King Henry initially had a strong liking of More.

Catherine.<sup>148</sup> Henry valued More's opinion. More recounts that on a number of occasions King Henry had asked More's thoughts on the 'great matter.' Thomas More was unpersuaded by his reasoning, and when he failed to offer his support, King Henry urged him to read and reflect on the materials that had been gathered in support of King Henry's stance. Henry even reportedly showed More the words from the King James Bible that he claimed had moved him to think his marriage to Catherine was void.<sup>149</sup> Past 1529, when More was made Chancellor), Henry continued to implore More to change his mind for multiple years. An excerpt from Roper states,

Now shortly upon his entry into the high office of the Chancellorship, the King yet eftsoons again moved him to weigh and consider his great matter, who, falling down upon his knees, humbly besought His Highness to stand his gracious Sovereign, as he ever since his entry into His Grace's service had found him, saying there was nothing in the world had been so grievous unto his heart as to remember that he was not able, as he willingly would, with the loss of one of his limbs, for that matter anything to find whereby he could, with his conscience, safely serve His Grace's contentation, as he that always bore in mind the most godly words that His Highness spake unto him at his first coming into his noble service, the most virtuous lesson that ever prince taught his servant, willing him first to look unto God, and after God to him, as, in good faith, he said he did, or else might His Grace well account him his most unworthy servant. To this the King answered, that if he could not therein with his conscience serve him, he was content to accept his service otherwise, and using the advice of other of his learned Council, whose consciences could well enough agree therewith, would nevertheless continue his gracious favor towards him, and never with that matter molest his conscience after.<sup>150</sup>

According to Roper, More truly felt badly that he was unagreeable with the King's opinion. He begged his King forgiveness that he could not agree. To which the King replied that "if he could not therein with his conscience serve him, he was content to accept his service otherwise, and using the advice of other of his learned Council, whose consciences could well enough agree

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<sup>148</sup> G. W. Bernard. *The Kings Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 128.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (C. 1556), 28-29, 2003, accessed June 18, 2018, <https://www.thomasmorestudies.org/docs/Roper.pdf>.

therewith, would nevertheless continue his gracious favor towards him, and never with that matter molest his conscience after.” The King stated that More did not have to serve him as Chancellor, and would cease to bother More about the matter. The latter did not occur. Of course, some historians believe that Roper exaggerates More’s position, and that More would not even have been as openly opposing towards the King. More denied doing anything to block the King’s divorce, and after Henry had attempted to persuade him, had taken no further part in the discussion of the ‘great matter.’ More even resigned as Chancellor in 1532, reportedly because the pardon of the clergy in 1531. had upset him to the degree that he no longer wished to hold his post. More then went into retirement, Thus, More was not even an opponent of Henry’s, just merely someone who did not share his opinion. More reportedly prayed for the King and Queen Anne, and was kind to the Queen; even though he did not agree with Henry on the spiritual matter of the marriage, he “respected Parliament’s right to name her as the lawful Queen.”<sup>151</sup> The point that started More’s downfall was in 1533, when he did not attend the Queen’s coronation. This knowledge was made public, and interpreted as More’s disagreeal with Henry. Henry could not allows this, and thus began his crusade against More to change his opinion. More did his best to support King Henry VIII, but the one thing he could not do was part with his morals. He would not give up his Catholic faith. After the acts of 1534, More was wise enough to never openly declare his opinion against the King (as this was now treason), and when questioned, would commonly assert that his opinion had already been made known to the King, and that he had no further comments. It was only once he was imprisoned that he began to challenge the King, such as in his conversation with Richard Rich.<sup>152</sup> In a letter to King Henry, on March 5,

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<sup>152</sup> Even this was dubious, as Rich was known for his persecution of those who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy. Many historians believe that Rich is an untrustworthy source. Of Richard, More stated that he, “nor no

1534, More said that he has been nothing but good to the King. More also repeatedly referenced the King's demeanor towards him, repeatedly calling his Highness nothing but "goodness and gracious." More declares that if the King now finds him some "wreche of such a monstrouse ingratitude," then he desires "no ferther favor at yor graciouse hand, than the losse of all that ever I may best value in this world, goods, lands, and libertie, and finally my life."<sup>153</sup> More was saying that his opinion made as much of a monster as his beloved King made it seem, then his king should just kill him. Thomas More's death is possibly the saddest, and also most important example of King Henry's tyranny. More, unlike many others who openly opposed the King, did nothing wrong except to have the wrong opinion (and very respectfully so, keeping his opinion to himself unless specifically asked) in the eyes of the law; because at this time, Henry was the law. He was the law of the kingdom and the law of the clergy, the church and the state. He was the supreme power in England. Under King Henry, there was no freedom of speech or religion, as clearly evidenced by More's tale. When it came to living under the rule of King Henry VIII, it was agree with him, or die. As the colonists in America were founded on communities like Plymouth, a group of Puritans fleeing to a new world for religious freedom, of course it would make sense for Thomas Jefferson to learn from the plight of his ancestors, and from the mistake of his English brethren. The English reformation had a direct impact on the formation of America -- meaning that it largely caused America to form the way that it did, meaning that while England continued to list their Monarch as the figurehead of the Church of England,

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man else to my knowledge, ever took you to be a man of such credit as in any matter of importance I, or any other, would at any time vouchsafe to communicate with you."

William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (C. 1556), 49-50, 2003, accessed June 18, 2018,

<https://www.thomasmorestudies.org/docs/Roper.pdf>.

<sup>153</sup> "Sir Thomas More to King Henry VIII," letter from Thomas More. March 5, 1534. Accessed June 18, 2018.

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/morehenry1534.htm>.

Americans decided to leave the church out entirely. Religious matters, they decided, were not important when drafting up the workings of a new government.

When matters of religion become involved in matters of state, then those matters of religion no longer become personal beliefs. They become guidelines that dictate every aspect of the way someone under the influence of their state and religion can interact with others. In Elizabethan times, the church and the state dictated every part of a citizen's life. They existed simultaneously, but acted independently. If one were to define 1534 England as technically comprised of the Catholic church and the monarchy of King Henry VIII, then in 1534 it was the unification of England that was the division of England. As in the case of Thomas More, King Henry VIII would not allow his followers to harbor beliefs that did not agree with his. These religious or political beliefs suddenly mattered a lot more when the wrong belief lawfully resulted in death. Even today there is a lot of dissent and controversy over religion; people still have different spiritual beliefs. A ruler or government cannot allow these beliefs to fracture his/its nation by bringing religious arguments into the affairs of state. Church and state work best when separated - law and religion do not mix. As Anglican priest and noted author Ralph S. Werrell states, "How can a nation which is divided spiritually be united temporally?"<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

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