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HENRY VIII: SUPREMACY, RELIGION, AND THE ANABAPTISTS

by

Joel Gillaspie

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

Approved:

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Major Professor

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2008

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## ABSTRACT

Henry VIII: Supremacy, Religion, and the Anabaptists

by

Joel Gillaspie, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2008

Major Professor: Dr. Norman Jones  
Department: History

In 1534, the English Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy. This effectively stripped all of the authority the Pope held in England and gave it to Henry VIII. Also because of the Act of Supremacy Henry VIII gained a new title: Supreme Head of the Church of England. However, there was a problem. The Act of Supremacy only vaguely defined the new powers that had been given to the King. Consequently, what exactly his new powers were and their limits had to be established. The other issue that had to be dealt with was the establishment of the canons of the Church of England. It was a new church with no canons or rules in place other than the establishment of Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the use of Anabaptists and Sacramentaries in the formulation of the doctrine of the Church of England and the expansion of Henry VIII's power as Supreme Head of the Church of England. Henry was able to use the Anabaptists and Sacramentaries because they posed no real threat to the state but were easy tools to be manipulated. The main documents that will be dealt with are the

November 1538 Royal Proclamation *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar*, the trial of John Lambert, and the February 1539 Royal Proclamation *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists*.

(58 pages)

To Laurie

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I would like to give very special thanks to my friends and family. Laurie White for all the love she has given me and the patience she has granted me as I worked to complete this thesis. Also my parents, I could not have completed this thesis without their love, support, and financial contribution. I would also like to thank Alan Bearman for his helpful words of wisdom during many lunches.

Joel Gillaspie

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In 1534, the English Parliament forever changed the religious establishment in England with the passing of the Act of Supremacy. With the passing of the Act of Supremacy the Church of England was born into existence and Henry VIII was granted the title and power as Supreme Head of the Church of England. The power he gained, was power that had been stripped from the Papacy. There was only one problem with granting new power to the King as Supreme Head of the church. What was this new power? How much power did the King get and what were the limits? The other issue that had to be dealt with was the establishment of the canons of the Church of England. It was a new church with no canons or rules in place other than the establishment of Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England.

Anabaptism was another variation of Protestant theology that began to emerge because of the Reformation. Their theology was considered the most heretical of the Reformation and they were persecuted all over Europe. Their notoriety as extreme heretics caught the eye of Henry VIII. He realized they would make good tools to use in helping establish his new church. The major focus of this thesis will be to explore the use of Anabaptists and their radical theology in creating religious policy and the power Henry VIII gained as Supreme Head of the Church between 1535 and 1540.

Since the death of Henry VIII, historians have written and rewritten many volumes of works interpreting his life and action. There has been little consensus on understanding Henry VIII and history in general. Each generation of historian adds a

different element to the discussion. This is the basis for the historiographies that need to be discussed in hopes to understand where this thesis fits into the discussion.

There are three historiographies that need to be explored, one concerning the Henrician Reformation, one concerning the relationship between Henry VIII and Anabaptist theology and one concerning Anabaptism itself. The first historiography is one that discusses the relationship between Henry VIII and the English Reformation. For the past several decades there has been discussion concerning Henry VIII's role in the break from the Roman Catholic Church. There are two opposing sides. The first side is the position of G.R. Elton and he contends that Henry VIII played a back seat role in the break with the Roman Catholic Church and the main player was his secretary Thomas Cromwell. To Elton, Henry was more a pawn of the two opposing religious factions, the Evangelicals and the Catholics. Henry followed and helped create the religious policy of the faction he found the most favorable at the time.<sup>1</sup>

There have been several historians that argue against Elton, but the most recent has been George Bernard. Bernard argues that Henry VIII was at the helm of the English Reformation. He was in full control of the political and religious policies that got created. There were religious factions but it was Henry who decided what the Church of England's religious formularies would look like and what would be considered acceptable practices for people in the Church of England. This thesis will be more in agreement with Bernard than Elton.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Cromwell* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

The second historiography will explore Henrician governmental reaction to Anabaptism. The two most important instances of governmental reaction to Anabaptists were the proclamations of November 1538 *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar* and February 1539, *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists*. These two proclamations appear frequently in discussions of religion in England. Two authors that directly address the proclamations are G.R. Elton, who addressed both Anabaptism and the proclamations, and George Bernard, who only addressed the proclamations. They have completely opposite opinions concerning the authorship and motivation behind the issuing of the proclamations.

Elton's synopsis of the two proclamations in his 1972 book *Policy and Police* is one of conflict between factions. Elton contends that the November 1538 proclamation was written to shift away from evangelical theological reform to conservatism. There was a battle going on within the government between conservatives and evangelical reformers, and, according to Elton, this proclamation was a backlash to reform. The backlash reached its peak with the passing of the Act of Six Articles in late 1539, ending further religious reform until Henry's death in 1547. He does believe that the reformers were able to get their jabs in despite the overwhelming conservativeness of the November 1538 proclamation. Their first attempt comes in the last two sections, which addressed superstitions and the burning of St. Thomas Beckett's bones. To Elton these demonstrate that the reformers, despite the blow they take in the main section of the proclamation, still wanted to demonstrate to the people that reform had not completely ended. The reformers' final thrust of reform before their defeat came primarily in the form of the

February 1539 proclamation. Elton suggests that Anabaptists and Sacramentaries were included because that was the best way to combat them in a general sense without having to burn too many people.

The February 1539 proclamation contains only two sections, but to Elton the language used to address the topics of each section was written as a direct counter to the 1538 proclamation. The Anabaptists were pardoned in a move to counter their condemnation in the 1538 decree. The 1539 rites and ceremonies section was written with a Lutheran theological position of justification by faith, unlike the 1538 proclamation. The success of the February 1539 proclamation was very short lived because six months later the Act of Six Articles strongly established the conservative agenda, defeating the reformers.<sup>3</sup> Elton makes a very strong case for his argument but George Bernard disagrees.

In his recent book *The King's Reformation*, George Bernard makes the claim that the majority of the religious change in England was due to Henry VIII and his strong will to make things happen. The two proclamations of November 1538 and February 1539 were no different. The proclamations were not a battle between evangelicals and conservatives. They were part of Henry's grand scheme to establish the theology and practice of his church. Henry was trying to find a middle ground theologically, and despite Elton's argument that the language used in the proclamations were fundamentally different, they were in fact, according to Bernard, completely in line with each other.

Interestingly, Bernard mentions nothing about the Anabaptists and Sacramentaries. It is understandable in the November 1538 proclamation because

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<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Cromwell* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), 254-258.

Anabaptists and Sacramentaries could just be considered a small part of the whole of the proclamation and nothing new in policy. Despite the possibility of insignificance in November 1538, when coupled with the February 1539 proclamation they cannot be ignored. These four months represent a rather significant shift in policy. To generally pardon the most horrible kind of heretics was something new to the policy of the government of Henry VIII and Bernard does not address this. This would be understandable if he did not address either proclamation, but he does. He makes a point to discredit the argument of Elton, that the November 1538 proclamation contains two seemingly different religious opinions. He also addresses the rites and ceremonies section of the February 1539 proclamation. He uses both proclamations to draw parallels between the language used in them and the Ten Articles, the Bishop's Book and the Act of Six Articles. These proclamations are used to help demonstrate Bernard's case that Henry VIII was trying to establish a religious middle road, and to explain why the language of the proclamations reflects both Lutheran and Catholic opinions.<sup>4</sup>

He does not address the pardon of the Anabaptists because either Bernard thinks the policy shift is insignificant or he has no idea what do with the policy shift. On a closer reading of the proclamation, the pardon could have helped Bernard make his case even further.

It is important to note why Bernard and Elton have differences. One of the main reasons for their differences is their ideologies on the nature of the Henrician Reformation. Elton views the English Reformation as a factional issue. The Protestants and the Catholics were on two extreme sides and both are trying to sway the King.

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<sup>4</sup> George W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 490-506.

Neither side would tolerate the other and both tried to use their power to sway the theology of the Church of England in their favor.

Bernard sees the English Reformation differently. To him, Henry VIII is in complete control and there is no factionalism. Bernard is part of the new trend in the English Reformation historiography. Scholars are starting to move away from the factionalism and are starting to see the Reformation in England under Henry VIII as movement with probably much less divisiveness between religious factions and Henry was strongly at the helm.<sup>5</sup>

The third historiography is concerned with Anabaptism and Anabaptism in England. The starting point for any research on Anabaptism in England is the book *Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* by Irving Horst, published in 1972. Horst's book provides a basic outline of instances when Anabaptists are mentioned in the *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, John Foxe's *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable*, and *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. Though Horst only gives a quick assessment of these instances he is a good guide to the sources.

He begins his synopsis with a royal proclamation issued in March 1535 commanding all foreign Anabaptists and Sacramentaries to leave the realm and warning English people not to fall victim to their heretical teachings. As a result of the proclamation 20 Dutch Anabaptists were burned at the stake in England. Nothing is mentioned again about Anabaptists and Sacramentaries in England until October, 1538, when a Royal Commission was established to hunt for and examine Anabaptists in the realm. The following month a Royal Proclamation was issued condemning domestic and

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<sup>5</sup> Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 3-5.

foreign Anabaptists and regulating religious activities including rites and ceremonies, the printing of illegal books, superstition, and calling for the destruction of St. Thomas Beckett's remains. This coincided with a public examination of a sacramentary by the name of John Lambert by Henry VIII himself. The final mention of Anabaptists and Sacramentaries between 1535 and 1540 is a Royal Proclamation that was issued in February 1539. It pardoned all domestic Anabaptists and Sacramentaries on the condition that they turn away from their beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Horst is an invaluable source as a starting point because he is quite thorough in his identification of Anabaptists in the sources, but not worth much after the starting point.

*Radical Brethren* was Irving Horst's 1962 dissertation. George Huntston Williams published his account of the Anabaptists in Europe and England in 1964 with his book *The Radical Reformation*. Williams is not very fulsome with his footnotes so it is hard to tell exactly where he is getting much of his information about Anabaptists. Williams introduces no new evidence and only takes several paragraphs to discuss the material that Horst takes several chapters to discuss.<sup>7</sup>

William Estep's book *The Anabaptist Story*, published originally in 1966 did not include Anabaptism in England, but the subject was added to the 1996 edition. Estep is one of the leading experts on Anabaptists in general, and he makes a point to discuss Anabaptism in England during the reign of Henry VIII. Despite his expertise on Anabaptism on the continent, Estep does not add anything new to the discussion of Anabaptism in England between 1535 and 1540. The only source Estep uses in his brief

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<sup>6</sup> Irving Buckwalter Horst, *Radical Brethren Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1972), 31-91.

<sup>7</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 401-403.

discussion of Anabaptism in England between 1535 and 1540 is Horst. He rehashes and conflates everything discussed in Horst. Other than Horst, Williams, and Estep there has been very little work done on Anabaptism in England.

This is where this thesis begins. Henry VIII was at the helm of his Reformation and was using his office as King and Supreme Head of the Church to get what he wanted religiously. Part of the process of achieving his goals was using the Anabaptists as tools to demonstrate his power. To fully demonstrate that claim it is necessary that this thesis start with the exploration of the Act of Supremacy and the establishment of the Church of England.

The first chapter of this thesis will explore the establishing of the Church of England. In 1532 the Act of Annates was passed, which started to cut the funds and power of the Pope in England. The complete severance of papal power in England came in 1534 with the passing of the Act of Supremacy, which gave Henry VIII full power as Supreme Head of the Church of England. Since the Act of Supremacy negated all power of the Pope in England, it was necessary for the religious canons of the Church of England to be established. The first attempt at this was the 1535 Henrician Canons. These canons, written up but never actually passed, demonstrate the desire to establish the religious practices of the Church of England. The next step in the establishment of the formularies of the Church of England was the Ten Articles and the *Bishop's Book*. These were works written by committees of bishops at the request of the King to make clear the formularies of the faith of the Church of England. Starting with the Henrician Canons, the Anabaptists start to become an example of religious practitioners who should not be followed. The reason for this was because of their views on Baptism and the



Eucharist. The Anabaptists became convenient targets because everybody knew who they were.

Chapter II will explore Anabaptists and why they became tools for the Church of England and Henry VIII. The Anabaptists were the most radical religious group of the Reformation period. After their actions in the city of Münster in 1535, they also became the most feared religious group in Europe. Initially following Münster, Henry VIII recognized them as a threat to England and like most other places in Europe, took action against them by issuing a Royal Proclamation that banished all foreign Anabaptists from the Realm. He had several burned in England. At the same time, it was realized that they could be used as examples when creating the religious establishment of the newly formed Church of England.

The third chapter deals with the power and authority Henry VIII gained through the use of the Anabaptists and Sacramentaries in the trial of John Lambert and the February 1539 Proclamation. Lambert was an English man who was found to be a heretic because he denied the Real Presences of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. According to the law, heretics were to be examined by a bishop and asked to recant. If they do not recant they are turned over to secular authority to be burned at the stake. Henry VIII presided over the trial of John Lambert and played the role of the examining bishop. Once Lambert refused to recant, Henry acted as the secular authority when he commanded that Lambert be burned on November 16<sup>th</sup> 1538. The next step in making it clear that he is Head of the Church is the proclamation of February 1539.

The proclamation of 1539 only contained two sections but these two sections were very potent. The first part of the proclamation is concerned with the rites and

ceremonies of the Church. It established a very clear stance on the practices and theology of the Church of England. On the one hand it made clear what rites and ceremonies should be practiced, but on the other it also made clear that they have no bearing on one's salvation. One is justified by faith not works. The other part of the proclamation is the pardon of the Anabaptists. This pardon was not about heresy. It was about Henry demonstrating that he can "pardon, forgive, and remit"<sup>8</sup> the sins of his people, the same as any Roman Catholic priest. This proclamation was all part of the process that led to the passing of the Act of Six Articles that cemented the practices and theological foundation of the Church of England.

In conclusion, Henry VIII clearly wanted to establish himself as head of the Church of England after his break with the Roman Catholic Church and gain as much power as he could. As part of this process it was necessary that the formularies of the Church of England be created and the Anabaptists were an easy tool to be manipulated to his ends. Henry started his grab for power using the Anabaptists and Sacramentaries in November 1538. He did this with use of the November 1538 and February 1539 proclamations, the trial of John Lambert, and the eventual passing of the Act of Six Articles.

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<sup>8</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 280.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ACT OF SUPREMACY

In 1534, all the Pope's power in England was lost with the passing of the Act of Supremacy by Parliament. This was not a great surprise to the King or the people around him. For several years leading up to the Act of Supremacy there had been actions taken by the King to remove some of the authority of the Pope and place the authority in the hands of the King.

This process started in 1530 when Henry started to make moves against the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. Fifteen clergymen were charged with *praemunire*. *Praemunire* was invoked as a crime when any person, but more often than not clergy, appealed to or obeyed a foreign court or authority. The reason it was applied most often to clergy was because of their loyalty to the Papacy. In this case, in 1530, Henry VIII charged the clergy with *praemunire* when they sided with Catherine of Aragon in Henry's divorce case. The King also made the demand that he be recognized as "sole protector and supreme head" with "the cure of his subjects' souls."<sup>1</sup>

The Convocation of the clergy met and acquiesced to Henry's demand but not without a qualifying phrase. They acknowledge Henry VIII "singular protector, only and supreme lord and, as far as the law of Christ allows, even supreme head." The phrase "as far as the law of Christ allows" negates any real power the king could gain from this because "as far as the law of Christ allows" the Pope was still the head of the Church and the King would be below him in authority.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael A. R. Graves, *Henry VIII: Profiles in Power* (Great Britain: Pearson Longman, 2003), 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

The next step in the process for Henry was to secure his divorce and make clear his authority in 1532 with the Act of Annates. This bill suspended much of the revenue the papacy received from the dioceses across England. This was done to make a clear statement to the Pope that he should decide favorably for Henry on the divorce he wanted and that Henry had authority against the Papacy. This was also a clear demonstration of the power Henry felt he had over the Papacy in England. Finally in 1534, the Act of Supremacy was passed.<sup>3</sup> It granted the King several powers and a new title:

Albeit, the King's Majesty justly and rightfully is and oweth to be the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognised by the clergy of this realm in their Convocations; yet nevertheless for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirp all errors, heresies and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same, Be it enacted by authority of this present Parliament that the King our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, preeminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the same Church belonging and appertaining. And that our said sovereign lord, his heirs and successors kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed corrected, restrained or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of the peace, unity and tranquillity of this realm: any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription or any other thing or things to the contrary hereof notwithstanding.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Michael A. R. Graves, *Henry VIII: Profiles in Power* (Great Britain: Pearson Longman, 2003), 150.

<sup>4</sup> "Act of Supremacy." (SR: 1534: 26 Henry VIII, c. 1) printed in G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents & Commentary*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), 364-365.

Now that Henry was Supreme Head of the Church of England, and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church was gone, some issues arose with defining with the formularies of faith of the Church of England. What were to be the exact doctrines and practices of the newly created Church of England? What Roman Catholic Church canons were still acceptable and what were not? It was basically accepted that all laws, doctrines, and practices from the Roman Catholic Church were acceptable so long as they did not trespass on the King's authority, but what authority did the King have? What was considered trespassing? What exactly was the definition of heresy? What beliefs made a heretic and what would be done if heretics were to be found? The Act of Supremacy did not make this readily clear, so definitions and doctrines had to be created.

The process of establishing the doctrines of faith and the practices of the Church of England took about five years. *The Henrician Canons* in 1535 were the first document that was produced,<sup>5</sup> despite them not becoming law. The Ten Articles (1536)<sup>6</sup> was accepted by the King and was followed by the *Bishops' Book* (1537).<sup>7</sup> Two royal injunctions were issued in 1536 and 1538.<sup>8</sup> The royal proclamation *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar* was issued on November 16, 1538,<sup>9</sup> and

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<sup>5</sup> Gerald Bray, ed. *Tudor Church Reform: The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (Church of England Record Society: The Boydell Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *Articles about Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825). URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). viewed on 10 February 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *The Institution Of A Christian Man; Containing The Exposition Or Interpretation Of The Common Creed, Of The Seven Sacraments, Of The Ten Commandments, And Of The Pater Noster, And The Ave Maria, Justification, And Purgatory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825). URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). viewed on 10 February 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Cromwell* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), 254.

<sup>9</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 270.

another royal proclamation *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists* was issued on February 26, 1539.<sup>10</sup> The step in this process was Act of Six Articles (1539).<sup>11</sup> Together all of these establish the canons of the Church of England.

The first step in this process was the establishment of a committee of 32 by the King, which consisted of doctors of the law. Their goal was to create what was to be called *The Henrician Canons*. They began their work almost simultaneously with the passing of the Act of Supremacy because as there was critical need to establish religious practices and statutes of the realm, to fill the void created by severing ties with Rome. Not surprisingly, one of the most important issues they tackled was heresy. They provided brief doctrinal positions of the Church and defined what was acceptable theology. This made clear what was heretical and what was not. Then they provided a brief description of what was to be done with heretics. Interestingly though, the canons established by this committee never became law. A continuance for the committee was not renewed in 1536 and their manuscript was not furthered.<sup>12</sup> The reason for its end is unclear.

The next step in the process was the Ten Articles. The Ten Articles was a collection of ten points of faith that should be followed and believed by members of the Church of England. A Convocation of bishops was put together to meet and decide on the doctrines. Once the bishops came to their conclusions the Ten Articles were considered to be “devised by the kings highnes majestie, to stablyshe christen quietnes

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<sup>10</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 278.

<sup>11</sup> “An Act of Abolishing Diversity of Opinions.” (1539: 31 Henry VIII, c. 14) printed in G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents & Commentary* (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), 389.

<sup>12</sup> Gerald Bray, ed. *Tudor Church Reform: The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*. (Church of England Record Society: The Boydell Press, 2000), xxvi - xxix.

and unitie amonge us, and to avoyde contentious opinions.”<sup>13</sup> This was the first time that many of these theological positions were discussed in a single document that became law. However, it is necessary to notice that all the points will be reiterated, copied, clarified, or expanded on in later documents. The Ten Articles established the general theme and points of discussion for all the documents pertaining the to theology and practice of the Church of England to come. Here is a brief outline of its points:

1. Defending the truth of the whole Biblical Canon; the believing in three Creeds: Apostles, Nicaean, and Athanasius; condemning any belief that was not in accordance with the four sacred councils: Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedone.
2. The Sacrament of baptism is the only way one can be saved and be truly cleansed of their sins.
3. The Sacrament of penance is necessary so that a man who was baptized and has again fallen into sin may be remitted of his sins and receive eternal life.
4. The Sacrament of the Altar: The King and Church believe in transubstantiation the wine and bread become the body and blood of Jesus Christ when blessed by the priest.
5. Justification results from a combination of contrition, faith and charity.
6. Images should only be used to honor God, Jesus, the Cross, Mary or any other Saint and not in a superstitious manner.

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *Articles about Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), 1. URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). viewed on 10 February 2008.

7. Saints are to be honored only as revered people who lived on earth and not in anyway equal to God.
8. It is acceptable to pray to saints to be intercessors for us to God, but only from God does salvation and remission of sins come.
9. The use of rites and ceremonies are good practices to put people in the mood of remembrance for their salvation and the acts of Jesus and God, but do not have any bearing on ones salvation.
10. Purgatory may exist, but not in the way the Roman Catholic Church believes.<sup>14</sup>

Following the Ten Articles, the first of two Royal Injunctions was issued late 1536. The purpose of the Injunction was to make clear that the clergy understood, practiced and enforced the new religious changes in England.

Deane, Persons, Vicars, and other hauing cure of soul any wher within this Deanry shall faithfully keepe and obserue, and as farre as in them may lie, shall cause to be kept and obserued of allother, al & singuler lawes, and statutes of thys realme, made for the abolishing and extirpation of the bishop of Romes pretended and vsurped power and iurisdiction within this realme, and for the stablishment and confirmation of the kynges authority and iurisdiction within the same. as of the supream head of the church of England... wheras certain articles were latelye deuised and put forthe by the kinges highnesse authority, and condescended by the prelates and clergy of this his realme in conuocation, wherof part were necessary to be holden and beleued for our saluation, and the other part doo concerne and touch certain laudable ceremonies, rites, and vsages of the church, mete and conuenient to be kept and vsed for a decent & politike order in the same.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *Articles about Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825). URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt) viewed on 10 February 2008.

<sup>15</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of Matters most Speciall and Memorable*. 1536 ed. pg 537. URL: [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3\\_1563\\_0527.jsp](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3_1563_0527.jsp) on 23 March 2008.



The next tool in defining the theology and practice of the Church of England came in 1537 with the *Bishop's Book*, also called *The Institution of the Christian Man*. The purpose of the *Bishop's Book* was to expand the discussion of “The Exposition or Interpretation of the Common Creed, of the Seven Sacraments, of the Ten Commandments, and of the Pater Noster, and the Ave Maria, Justification and Purgatory.”<sup>16</sup>

The *Bishop's Book* was a far longer work than the Ten Articles and it began where the Ten Articles left off. Henry VIII knew that he needed a clear formulary of faith for the Church in England, if he was going to be able to maintain the Church of England and provide the necessary spiritual guidance his subjects so deserved.

The following year two more documents were issued that helped perpetuate the religious changes in England. The first was a second Royal Injunction entitled *Injunctions given by the autoritie of the kynges highnes to the Clergie of this his Realme*. The 1538 Injunction made clear that the Bible in English would be placed in all churches so the people had access to it and could read it. It also made clear that abuses of superstition in rites and ceremonies should be removed.<sup>17</sup>

Also in 1538 the royal proclamation *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar* was issued.<sup>18</sup> This proclamation has two major themes. It clarifies the theology

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *The Institution Of A Christian Man; Containing The Exposition Or Interpretation Of The Common Creed, Of The Seven Sacraments, Of The Ten Commandments, And Of The Pater Noster, And The Ave Maria, Justification, And Purgatory*.(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), 1. URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt) viewed on 10 February 2008.

<sup>17</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of Matters most Speciall and Memorable*. 1536 ed. pg 537. URL: [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3\\_1563\\_0530.jspon](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3_1563_0530.jspon) 23 March 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 270-276.

and practice, and protects the King's subjects from heresy by removing heretics and their books from the realm.

This was the first Royal Proclamation since the break with Rome concerning religious matters. The theological topics the November 1538 proclamation addressed were the Sacrament of the Eucharist, rites and ceremonies, celibacy of priests, superstition, and baptism. These were all, except priestly marriage, restatements of previous declarations pertaining to the theology and practice of the Church. The King's position on the Sacrament of the Eucharist never changed. Transubstantiation considered the only true way to understand and practice the Eucharist. The understanding of rites and ceremonies was just a reiteration of the explanation given in the Ten Articles. It was also made clear that superstition should be avoided concerning all rites and ceremonies. The proclamation said that "and the maintainers, abettors, printers, sellers, keepers, or utterers of any books, out of which any such lewd opinions, either against the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, or setting for any erroneous opinion of the said Anabaptists"<sup>19</sup> shall be punished.

Two more religious documents were issued in 1539 to put the final touches on the religious establishment and the authority of Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England. The first was another Royal Proclamation issued in February 1539 entitled *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists*.<sup>20</sup> The proclamation only had two goals. The first one was to clarify and expand the positions on practicing rites and ceremonies both established in the Ten Articles and the *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à*

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<sup>19</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 273.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

*Becket from Calendar*<sup>21</sup> proclamation. The section on rites and ceremonies continued to spell out which ceremonies and rites should be practiced and how. It also reiterates the position that rites and ceremonies should be practiced and were good for a person to practice, but these practices had no bearing on one's salvation. The second part of the proclamation was concerned with the pardoning of Anabaptists and Sacramentaries.<sup>22</sup>

The second document was the Act of Six Articles, which was passed by the Parliament in 1539 at the King's will. The Act reiterated several points that the King wanted to make clear. The Act of Six Articles addressed the Sacrament of the Altar, Communion, Priestly Marriage, Vows of Chastity, Private Masses, and Auricular Confession.<sup>23</sup> After the passage of the Act of Six Articles, the religious formularies of the Church of England changed very little until the death of Henry VIII in 1547.

It is also necessary to make clear the differences between an Act of Parliament, a Royal Proclamation and a Royal Injunction. During the reign of Henry VIII parliament would pass acts that became state law. The Act of Supremacy and the Act of Six Articles were good examples of this. Parliament passed the Act but in most cases it was done at the request of the King. A Royal Proclamation on the other hand was directly from the pen and authority of the King. The proclamation became law and did not have to be approved by parliament. So the two proclamations issued in November 1538 and February 1539 were straight from the desk of the King and represented his will. A Royal

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<sup>21</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 275.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-80.

<sup>23</sup> George W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 500-504.

Injunction was issued in the name of the King, usually by his secretary, and it helped reiterate and enforce established laws.

As part of the creation of the Church of England and its formularies of faith, one important group started to emerge as an important tool for the King to use when defining the state religion. This group was the Anabaptists. They started to play a role as the group of religious radicals that would not be tolerated, and their practices became the prime examples in all the religious documents as heresy that would be condemned. They also were eventually used by Henry VIII to increase his power as Supreme Head of the Church. The next chapter will discuss the history of the Anabaptists and how they came to play a role in the religious establishment of the Church of England.

### CHAPTER III

### ANABAPTISM

The Anabaptists were able to used by the King because of the fear and hatred they aroused in any right thinking Protestant or Catholic during the reformation period.

Anabaptists were the radicals of the Reformation. The theology of Anabaptism ran a wide gamut of beliefs. It ranged from those who denied the Real Presence in the Eucharist to those who went to the extreme of setting up a new Jerusalem for the second coming of Christ. Despite this wide range of views there was one common theme that united them all, their theological understanding of Baptism.

Anabaptist means the re-baptized. Almost all sects of Anabaptists followed the practice of adult baptism or baptism of the believer. The general consensus was that one should only be baptized when a conscious decision had been made to become a follower and believer in Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The outward display of that decision was to be baptized.

The only problem was that almost the entire western European population had been baptized as infants, as establish by the Roman Catholic Church. So to be baptized again as an adult was considered heretical because it denied power in the first baptism.<sup>2</sup>

Anabaptism was a product of the Reformation, but no mainstream protestant sect wanted anything to do with this theology and neither did the Roman Catholic Church.

Everybody was on a hunt to rid the continent of Anabaptism by either recantation or execution in various forms.

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<sup>1</sup> William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 7-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-13.

The Anabaptism began as a break from the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich. Zwingli's reforms began in a similar way to those of Luther, and only a few years after Luther's posting of the 95 Theses in 1517. As a priest and scholar, Zwingli had started to delve into the Gospel, especially Greek texts, and was convinced that the Bible was the true teachings of God. Consequently, he believed it was the only path to God, not the Roman Catholic Church and its traditions. Zwingli was called by the city to be the priest in Zurich and by 1522 he was steadily guiding a reformation in Zurich by preaching only the Gospel. He quickly gained several disciples because of his preaching and teaching but one in particular, Conrad Grebel, was just as voracious if not more than Zwingli in his studying of the Bible and his conviction that *sola scriptura*, or the Bible alone, was the only way to understand and practice Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

It did not take long for a rift to develop between Zwingli and Grebel. Despite all his talk, Grebel did not believe Zwingli was taking the reform far enough. To get his reforms and theology established, Zwingli had to bow his head and concede things to the City Council of Zurich, who controlled the city. This became very evident to Grebel during a disputation, a formalized public debate, in October of 1523. The disputation was designed to cover a single topic a day and help establish the theology of the reform church in Zurich. The discussion of the second day concerned the Mass. Zwingli and Grebel had discussed prior to the disputation that it was their goal to get rid of the Mass. On the day of the disputation no conclusion was reached and Grebel wanted to continue discussion to the next day, but the council did not. When Grebel objected, Zwingli replied, "My Lords will decide whatever regulations are to be adopted in the future in

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<sup>3</sup> William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 11-13.

regard to the Mass.”<sup>4</sup> At that moment Grebel realized that Zwingli was never going to push the reform as far as he thought it needed to go. Following this disputation Grebel started to meet with other sympathizers and they held their own Bible studies and worked to reform the church in Zurich according to their beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

It was during their Bible studies that the topic of baptism surfaced. Several people in Zurich and the surrounding area started to question the practice of infant baptism because in their studies of the Gospels, baptism should occur once a person became a believer. This discounted infant baptism, which was the established doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. A few locals even decided not to get their infants baptized. This created a crisis in Zurich on the doctrine of baptism.

Grebel accepted the position of baptism of the believer as the correct way to practice according to the Gospel, but neither he nor his followers had yet decided to be baptized. As a result of the baptism crisis a disputation was called in early January 1525. Zwingli was the disputer for the Zurich Church and Grebel was the disputer for the opposition. At the end of the disputation, the City Council of Zurich announced Zwingli the winner and Grebel and his followers were given an edict. They could give up their heretical position and assimilate back into the Zurich church, leave Zurich, or face prison. Most went to prison. After their failure at the disputation, Grebel and his followers, approximately a dozen or so, met one evening and baptized themselves as a sign of their true and right faith. Thus, Anabaptism was born.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-15.

Anabaptism spread quite rapidly from the Swiss Brethren and other places throughout the European continent. One place that it did not seem to touch as quickly was England. The eradication of heresy and heretics was important to Henry VIII but these heretics did not get officially called Anabaptists by the government until 1535 when a Royal Proclamation called *Ordering Anabaptists to Depart the Realm* was issued denouncing them.<sup>7</sup> Prior to this, several proclamations had been issued regarding heresy and the printing and distribution of heretical books. The first proclamation, *Enforcing Statutes Against Heresy; Prohibiting Unlicensed Preaching, Heretical Books* was issued in March 1529.<sup>8</sup> This proclamation condemned “the corruption and malice of indiscreet preachers...as by certain heretical and blasphemous books lately made and privately sent into the realm by disciples, fautours, and adherents of the said Martin Luther and other heretics.”<sup>9</sup> There is no mention of Anabaptists. Another proclamation *Prohibiting Erroneous Books and Bible Translations* was issued in June of 1530.<sup>10</sup> It condemns the heretical books entering England from Holland and France. Neither proclamation dealt with Anabaptism or anything resembling it.

The first time Anabaptism was mentioned was not in a Royal Proclamation but in *A dialoge descrybing the orygyvall ground of these Lutheran faccyons* by William Barlow after he returned to England from a visit to Germany in 1531.<sup>11</sup> However it was almost 10 years after Grebel began the Anabaptist movement, the English Government took notice of Anabaptism and issued the proclamation *Ordering Anabaptists to Depart*

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<sup>7</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 227-228.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-186.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-197.

<sup>11</sup> Irving Buckwalter Horst, *Radical Brethren Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1972), 44.



*the Realm* in March 1535.<sup>12</sup> This was done because of the Anabaptist settlement of Münster. Two years prior Anabaptists had seized the city of Münster and the result of this settlement caused the English government to take notice.

Münster was a German city with a population of around 15,000 by the early 1530s. It was like a lot of German cities affected by the Reformation. Catholics originally had religious control but Lutheranism and other protestant theologies were starting to make their way into the city. The fall of the city and influence of Anabaptists started with a man named Bernard Rothmann. He started out as a preacher in the cathedral but the leaders in the cathedral decided to send him to the University of Cologne to study because of his talent for preaching. There, Rothmann became influenced by Lutheran doctrine. He returned to Münster in 1531 and almost immediately started to spread his new theological understanding.<sup>13</sup>

He was removed as a preacher in the Cathedral but continued to preach in the city and gained quite a following. As he continued to preach, his theology became more and more radical. The city council on several occasions made attempts to stop his preaching and remove him from the city but because of his growing influence among the people they were unable to expel him.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time two Anabaptists, John Mathjis and John Beukels, were looking for a safe place to live. They were living in the Spanish Netherlands, which had started a movement to persecute radicals and Anabaptists. John Beukels had heard of Rothmann in Münster and he visited. Beukels liked the city and sparked the idea in John Mathjis's

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<sup>12</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 227-228.

<sup>13</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 364.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 365-368.

mind that this was place for them to establish their New Jerusalem. Rothmann had been preaching against infant baptism and was quickly baptized by one of Mathjis and Beukel's emissaries. Mathjis and Beukels arrived not long after in 1533.<sup>15</sup>

Once John Mathjis arrived, he quickly allied himself with Rothmann's followers and started to run the city. By 1534, Mathjis and Beukel started discussing violence against all the people in the city who did not support the New Jerusalem. Fortunately, most of the people who had not fallen into lockstep with Rothmann and then Mathjis had already left the city. At the same time, the Roman Catholic bishop of the city and a group of Lutherans had returned with an army to besiege the city and reclaim it from the radicals. The residents of the city acted quickly to fortify the city to withstand a long siege.<sup>16</sup>

Mathjis quickly changed the governmental structure of the city to a communal state, as exemplified in the book of Acts. Private money and food were declared public for use of the whole population. Houses were able to kept by the owners but they had to keep their doors open at all times and were only able to put up a small fence in front of the door to keep animals out.<sup>17</sup>

By April 1534, the siege works of the bishop's army outside Münster had intensified. Skirmishing parties were sent out by Mathjis to hinder the siege. John Mathjis joined one skirmishing party on April 4, 1534 and was killed during the fighting. After his death John Beukels promptly assumed control of the city.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 368.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 369-370.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

John Beukels was a far more harsh overseer than John Mathjis. He dismissed the newly elected city council and appointed his own council of twelve, who were considered the equivalent to the Judges of the Tribes of Israel from the Old Testament. They had control over every aspect of life, both worldly and spiritual in Münster. Sin was not tolerated, especially since all current residents of the city had been re-baptized and cleansed of their sinful ways. John Beukels claimed he was given power to rule by God after the death of John Mathjis, so defying Beukels was to defy God himself. As a consequence many sins that were previously not punishable by death soon came to be. “Sins punishable by death included blasphemy, seditious language, scolding one’s parents, disobeying one’s master in a household, adultery, lewd conduct, backbiting, spreading scandal, and complaining!”<sup>19</sup>

If this was not controversial enough, John Beukels decided, in keeping with the Old Testament model in the Davidic community, that polygamy should be introduced to Münster. A group of people rose up in opposition and imprisoned John but loyal followers rescued him and he had the opposition brutally killed. Beukels iron rule became absolute. In June 1534, after defeating a particularly heavy assault on Münster by the bishop’s army, he had himself crowned King. Despite all the success, King John ran into many problems during his rule. Despite the inability of the besieging army to take Münster, they had successfully cut off most of the supplies and food going into the city. The people of the city were beginning to starve and King John could do nothing. He eventually had to resort to sending a large portion of the elderly, woman, and children outside of the city. Sadly the besieging army killed most of them. Finally on June 25, 1535, the bishop’s army, along with a Lutheran army, took the city and proceeded to kill

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<sup>19</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 371.

everyone who still remained. Beukels and two of his men were tortured with hot irons and then placed in cages from the steeple of the Cathedral to starve to death.<sup>20</sup>

The word Anabaptist automatically got associated with Münster after its fall. They became feared because of the apprehension that they would overthrow other governments. Henry VIII saw them as heretics that needed to be taken care of and made it clear that none should preach or spread Anabaptist heresies in his realm. Consequently the Royal Proclamation, *Ordering Anabaptists to Depart the Realm* was issued in March 1535. This proclamation dealt specifically with Anabaptists, their heresies, and the King's desire for them to either leave the realm or be killed. The king made clear examples of around 20 foreign Anabaptists that were captured and burned at the stake.<sup>21</sup> This proclamation was very clear. It defined Anabaptism and their heretical practices that would not be tolerated.

For because that of late many strangers, born out of the King's obedience, are arrived and come into this realm, which, albeit that they were baptized in their infancy and childhood according to the ordinance of the universal Church of Christ; yet that notwithstanding, in contempt of the holy sacrament of baptism so given and received, they have of their own presumption and authority lately rebaptized themselves; and over and beside that, they deny the most blessed and holy sacrament of the later to be really the very body of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

This was very important because it is the only time in the Royal Proclamations that a definition of Anabaptism was given. Later, when Anabaptists are mentioned in documents, it was assumed the reader knew the definition of Anabaptists and their heresies.

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<sup>20</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 380-81.

<sup>21</sup> Irving Buckwalter Horst, *Radical Brethren Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop: B. De. Graaf, 1972), 60-61.

<sup>22</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 227.

The 1535 proclamation *Ordering Anabaptists to Depart the Realm*<sup>23</sup> condemning foreign Anabaptists was the first use of Henry VIII's authority against a specific heretical group since the Act of Supremacy. The Anabaptists seizure of Münster caused them to be perceived as an imminent political and religious threat to England, and Henry had to exercise his authority to protect his realm.<sup>24</sup> As an unplanned result of Henry issuing the proclamation, precedent was set that Anabaptists and their heresies would not be tolerated in England and the punishment for them would be death. The proclamation made clear that "a great number of them [foreign Anabaptists] been judicially and lawfully convicted of their detestable heresies, and have and shall for the same suffer pains of death, as reason and justice requireth in that behalf."<sup>25</sup>

Münster had created a big enough stir that prior to the proclamation Henry had already received warnings of Anabaptists activities. A man by the name of William Lok wrote to Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell about finding Anabaptists in Barrow and that they would be burned. He also made clear, "They are in great fear of them [Anabaptists] in the Low Countries, as the town of Leeth (Liege?) is all of that set; and many men of war have been sent against it, to destroy that town first then go to Mynster."<sup>26</sup> Münster made everybody scared of Anabaptists and it was important that Henry do something about it, thus the proclamation was issued.

Henry's intentions for dealing with the Anabaptists through the March 1535 proclamation and burnings at the stake can be noted in a letter sent in June to Papal

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<sup>23</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 227-228

<sup>24</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 362-381.

<sup>25</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 227-228.

<sup>26</sup> J.S. Brewer and J.Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, vol viii. (London, 1862-1910), 76.

secretary Ambrogio from the Bishop of Faenza that states, “For this several of them [Anabaptists] have been already executed, and it appears that the King intends to persecute this sect as much as he can, as it already has firm footing in England.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1535, the formulary of faith for the Church of England was still in its infancy. No direct claim of who or what theology was heretical had been made other than what was in the 1535 proclamation. Setting a theological position was not important with this proclamation, but dealing with the Anabaptist threat was. It was important that until canons of faith of the Church of England were established Henry should not exercise his power as Supreme Head of the Church and establish doctrine but because of the threat the Anabaptists posed he had to step in. This was one of the first instances that Henry VIII exercised his authority as Supreme Head of the Church since the passing of the Act of Supremacy.

Interestingly, the 1535 proclamation also seems to suggest that no English citizen has yet fallen victim to the heresies of these foreign Anabaptists. “And over this his highness straightly chargeth and commandeth that none of his own loving and natural subjects be so hardy to hold, keep, or teach any errors of heresies contrary to God and his Holy Scripture, upon like pains above remembered.”<sup>28</sup> This meant the King saw them as a threat from outside and not within. This proclamation was singular in purpose; foreign Anabaptists would not be tolerated.

The following year, 1536, was the first time Anabaptism was used as a theological term to help establish religion in England. This was different than 1535

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<sup>27</sup> J.S. Brewer and J.Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, vol viii. (London, 1862-1910), 323.

<sup>28</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 228.

proclamation *Ordering Anabaptists to Depart the Realm* because no direct threat was made to Anabaptists. In 1536 the King had called a Convocation under the guidance of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, to produce a religious document that would outline the tenets of the faith of the Church of England. This document was to “stablyshe christen quietnes and unitie Amonge us, and to avoyde contentious opinions.”<sup>29</sup> The beliefs of the Anabaptists became a part of this document because their beliefs were a prime example of what would not be tolerated concerning the sacrament of Baptism.

Anabaptism was discussed in article two concerning baptism of the Ten Articles. The government made it clear that it is acceptable for any person to be baptized as an infant or adult, just so long as they were baptized only once. The government preferred that infants were baptized to clear the stain of original sin, but if somebody was not baptized as an infant believer’s baptism was acceptable. In the following passage from the Ten Articles the government made it clear that Anabaptism would not be tolerated.

Item, That children or men once baptized, can, ne ought ever to be baptized again.

Item, That they ought to repute and take all the anabaptists and the Pelagians opinions contrary to the premises, and every other man s opinion agreeable unto the said anabaptists or the Pelagians opinions in this behalf, for detestable heresies, and utterly to be condemned.<sup>30</sup>

This statement assumed that a person was familiar with and fully understood the definition of the Anabaptist and Pelagians heresies concerning baptism. As previously discussed, the Anabaptist heresy was a second baptism. This means that first baptism as

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *Articles about Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825). URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). Viewed on 10 February 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *Articles about Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), 6. URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). Viewed on 10 February 2008.

an infant meant nothing. It was a direct challenge to God because through the act of baptism God washed one's sins away. So to believe God's power during the infant baptism was not effective and one needed to be baptized again was a direct challenge to the power of God. It was also a direct challenge to the power structure of the Church and the person with the authority to baptize. If a person did not need a priest to be baptized and anybody could do it, then the church structure did not need to exist since everybody can perform the rite to remit sins, making the church community unnecessary.

The Pelagian opinion of baptism was that it was a tool in helping one eventually come to a belief in Jesus Christ and his salvation. It did not completely remit sins like the orthodox position supposed. Orthodox Christian tradition believed that original sin bound the will and the Pelagian opinion asserted freewill. One had the choice to be baptized or not and thus, whether one was saved or not was not up to God but it was up to the individual. This belief was another direct challenge to God and the institutions that defended him.<sup>31</sup> It also was a direct challenge to Henry VIII. Henry had a strong sense of duty when it came to leading his people or flock to salvation. He wanted to make sure that none of his sheep's souls would be damned to hell. The Pelagian opinion denies him this authority because it gives each individual the right to decide to get baptized.

It is also important to note that the term Anabaptist does not appear alone. The Ten Articles began the trend of pairing Anabaptists with another form of heresy. In the Ten Article and the *Bishop's Book*, Anabaptists are paired with Pelagians. This ended with the royal proclamation *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists* in 1539. In this proclamation and the November 1538 proclamation, Anabaptists were

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<sup>31</sup> Philip Schaff. *NPNF1-05. St. Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings* (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886). URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.xiv.lxi.html>. Viewed on 20 February 2008.



paired with sacramentaries. Sacramentaries were people who did not believe in the transubstantiation of the Eucharist. It also makes it quite clear that Anabaptism is not being directly dealt with. It is being used as a definition of heresy that one should not subscribe to, and one that the Church of England would not associate itself with. It makes no claims of consequences for people who decided to believe in the Pelagian baptismal theology or people who had decided to get rebaptized. It just made clear that these heresies have no place in the Church of England and loyal God fearing people should not believe such things.

The language concerning Anabaptists in the *Bishop's Book* and Ten Articles was identical. The following passage is from the *Bishop's Book* and reads almost exactly the same as the Ten Articles.

Item, That children or men once baptized ought never to be baptized again.

Item, That all good Christian men ought and must repute and take all the Anabaptists and the Pelagians opinions, which be contrary to the premises, and every other man s opinion, agreeable unto the said anabaptists or the Pelagians opinions in that behalf, for detestable heresies, and utterly to be condemned.<sup>33</sup>

No other reference was made to the Anabaptists in the *Bishop's Book*. There was no discussion of specific people who were imprisoned for such heresies or no threats of punishment for people who committed such heresies. They again were only being used as theological positions to make clear the theology of the Church of England concerning

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *The Institution Of A Christian Man; Containing The Exposition Or Interpretation Of The Common Creed, Of The Seven Sacraments, Of The Ten Commandments, And Of The Pater Noster, And The Ave Maria, Justification, And Purgatory.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), 47. URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). Viewed on 10 February 2008.

baptism. The coalescing of the theology of the Church of England takes its next step in 1538.

The 1538 Proclamation *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar* links Anabaptism with the sacrament of the Eucharist as a theological position that should not be followed. Most importantly, it adds a new element not previously discussed; punishment for heretics.<sup>34</sup> They were clearly being used as theological targets in accordance with Church Law, but the position was being interwoven with other powers given to Henry VIII in the Act of Supremacy and that was to protect and extinguish any threat to Christianity that could hurt the Church of England and its believers. This mixing of powers will be visited more fully later.

The Proclamation *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists* was issued on February 26, 1539.<sup>35</sup> It was the final proclamation issued dealing with Anabaptist during the reign of Henry VIII. It pardoned all domestic Anabaptists and Sacramentaries of any heresies they had committed without so much as an examination by the Church. So long as the heretics turned from their ways, they were forgiven and pardoned of their sins they had committed as heretics. This was the only time in the reign of Henry VIII that a general pardon was issued for a matter relating to heretics or heresy.<sup>36</sup>

This proclamation does not seem to fit to the pattern of how Henry VIII dealt with heretics, especially Anabaptists. In 1535 he had 20 foreign Anabaptists burned and in

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<sup>34</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 270-276.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-280.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-377.

November 1538 he had another four Anabaptists burned at the stake. Following the issuance of the November 1538 proclamation, there was a very public trial of a sacramentary named John Lambert, in which the King personally examined and disputed the heretic with the result Lambert was killed for heresy.<sup>37</sup> This change in policy does not make sense as it concerns the Anabaptists. Henry clearly had no problems killing or dealing with heretics, so why would he suddenly decide they should be pardoned in England? The only way this question can be answered is to look at the proclamations concerning Anabaptists as part of a larger scheme by Henry VIII's government. The conclusion that can be reached is that it was not about the Anabaptists. It was about establishing the theology and practice for the Church of England and making clear the power Henry had in his new role as Supreme Head of the Church of England.

The government was truly concerned with Anabaptists their heresies, their presence as a possible threat to England, and with the souls of the English people when they issued the 1535 proclamation. This was not the case for the latter mentions of Anabaptists between 1535 and 1540. With a closer reading of the text, it can be demonstrated that in the 1538 proclamation they were being used as tools to establish theological positions of the government and illustrate to the people of England who not to socialize with. In the 1539 proclamation, it can be demonstrated that they were being used as straw men for the King to display his powers of religious clemency since he had become Supreme Head of the Church of England.

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<sup>37</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of Matters most Speciall and Memorable*. 1536 ed. Book 3, 534-537. URL: [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3\\_1563\\_0537.jsp](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3_1563_0537.jsp) Viewed on 23 March 2008.

Other instances in which Anabaptists were mentioned are in the Ten Articles in 1536<sup>38</sup> and the *Bishop's Book* in 1537<sup>39</sup>. In both instances they are used as examples of heretics and what heresy not to fall victim to. The Ten Articles and *Bishop's Book* were both documents that helped established the theology and practice of the new Church of England under the reign of Henry VIII.

In the grander scheme, after the 1535 proclamation, Anabaptists were part of the general movement to establish the theology and practice of the Church of England and the King's powers as Supreme Head of the Church between 1535 and 1540.

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<sup>38</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *Articles about Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825). URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). Viewed on 10 February 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Lloyd, ed. *The Institution Of A Christian Man; Containing The Exposition Or Interpretation Of The Common Creed, Of The Seven Sacraments, Of The Ten Commandments, And Of The Pater Noster, And The Ave Maria, Justification, And Purgatory.*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825). URL: [http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://ia301110.us.archive.org/1/items/formulariesfaith00unknuoft/formulariesfaith00unknuoft_djvu.txt). Viewed on 10 February 2008.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELIGIOUS POWER OF THE KING

The first chapter discussed the powers Henry VIII was given to cleanse Christianity in England when he established the Church of England and how Anabaptists were used to help in this process. Along with the power to create and practice the true Christianity in England, Henry had the power to enforce it, especially against heretics, which was made clear in the Preamble to the Act of Supremacy.

...and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, preeminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the same Church belonging and appertaining. And that our said sovereign lord, his heirs and successors kings of this realm, *shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities*, whatsoever they be, which by any manner spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed corrected, restrained or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of the peace, unity and tranquillity of this realm: any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription or any other thing or things to the contrary hereof notwithstanding.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1535 and 1538 there was no formal action by the King against heretics.

In the meantime, the process of establishing the formulary of faith for the Church of England was clearly underway. As previously talked about in the last chapter, The Ten Articles and *The Bishop's Book* made clear statements against Anabaptists but not directly against a specific person. They were used to define what the Church of England and its people should not believe. This meant the punishment was left to the King.

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<sup>1</sup> "Act of Supremacy." (SR: 1534: 26 Henry VIII, c. 1) printed in G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents & Commentary* (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), 364-365.

In the fall of 1538 things changed. On the first of October 1538, a Royal Commission of bishops was established by the King “to search for and examine Anabaptists, receive back into the Church such as renounce their error, hand over those persist in it to the secular arm for punishment, and destroy all books of that detestable sect.”<sup>2</sup> Several scholars have debated the calling of the commission. The general consensus is that it was a reaction to a letter that was intercepted from an Anabaptist in Germany.<sup>3</sup> The letter made the claim that Anabaptists had escaped to England after Münster.<sup>4</sup> There are no records that the commission found any Anabaptists but the commission is another example of a reaction to the threat of Anabaptists.

By November 1538, the Church of England’s formulary of faith was becoming clear and the King decided to directly add his input through another Royal Proclamation: *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar*.<sup>5</sup> This proclamation dealt with Anabaptists and their punishment in a similar manner to the 1535 proclamation but the reasons behind it was different.

The 1535 proclamation was issued by the King as an attempt at protection and self-preservation from the possible threat of Anabaptists. The 1538 proclamation was issued to add to the formulary and make clear that punishment would occur. One of the stark differences between the 1535 and 1538 proclamation was how Anabaptists were discussed. The 1538 lumps together “Anabaptists and Sacramentaries.” This was done to

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<sup>2</sup> J.S. Brewer and J.Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, vol xiii. (London, Kraus Reprint Ltd,1862-1910), 195.

<sup>3</sup> Irving Buckwalter Horst, *Radical Brethren Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop: B. De. Graaf, 1972), 80-83.

<sup>4</sup> J.S. Brewer and J.Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, vol xiii. (London, Kraus Reprint Ltd,1862-1910), 105.

<sup>5</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 270-276.

make a point of emphasizing the two theological doctrines the King cared the most about; Baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>6</sup>

Early in the proclamation the King asserted his authority as Supreme Head of the Church:

Whereupon his majesty, most prudently pondering and considering the great cure and charge which it hath pleased Almighty God of his infinite goodness to commit to his majesty over all the congregation of the said Church of England, and above all things earnestly willing and desiring to advance and set forth the holy word of God, to his divine honor and glory, and to conserve his said realm and church, committed to his charge, in peace, unity, rest, and tranquility, clear and void from all wicked errors, erroneous opinions, and dissension, doth therefore straightly charge and command by this his present proclamation, as well all and singular subjects, of what degree or quality soever they be, as all other residents or inhabitants within this his realm, or within any his grace's dominions, that from henceforth they and every of them for his part shall obey, keep, and observe all and singular such articles as hereafter follow, upon pains and penalties contained and specified in the same.<sup>7</sup>

Punishment did follow the proclamation. Punishment came when three Anabaptists and a sacramentary were burned at the stake. Three foreign Anabaptists were burned at the stake, two men named Jan Mathjis (Not the Jan Mathjis from Münster) and Peter Franke, and one lady, who was Peter Franke's wife.<sup>8</sup> Their burning was no different than that of the 20 Anabaptists burnt in 1535. The punishment of the Sacramentary was far more important than that of the Anabaptists.

A sacramentary, John Lambert, was dealt with by the King in coordination with the proclamation, his trial and the issuing of the proclamation occurring on the same day. John Lambert (or Nicholson) was a preacher who had been found guilty of heresy by

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<sup>6</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 270-276.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>8</sup> The Chronicle of the Grey Friars: Henry VIII', *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London: Camden Society old series, volume 53* (1852), pp. 29-53. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=51587>. Viewed on 20 March 2008.

several bishops because of his belief about the Eucharist. Lambert believed that the wine and bread did not physically transform into the body and blood of Jesus, but only spiritually transformed in the body. This position would not be tolerated because it was counter to the King's belief in the transubstantiation of the wine and bread into the body and blood of Jesus. After the examination by the bishops, Lambert appealed to the King to hear his position and the King agreed because it was a good chance for him to display himself and his knowledge as Supreme Head of the Church.<sup>9</sup>

According to church law, when a person was suspected of holding erroneous opinions counter to established church doctrine, they were to be examined by their bishop. A church court would then make the determination if the person's opinion was heretical. If it was heretical, the person was asked to recant his or her error and receive only minor punishment. If the person did not recant and continued in his or her ways, he or she was considered a heretic and was handed over to secular authorities to be punished, most often by being burned at the stake.<sup>10</sup>

Since Lambert appealed to the King, the King would be the Supreme Head of the Church who would examine his heretical opinions. The King decided it was important to make a grand show of the affair. All of the important bishops and lords of the realm attended. The king sat on his throne and disputed with Lambert on the subject of the Sacrament of the Altar. The examination lasted for over five hours and John Foxe recorded the end,

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<sup>9</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of Matters most Speciall and Memorable*. 1536 ed. Book 3, 534-537. URL: [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3\\_1563\\_0537.jsp](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3_1563_0537.jsp) Viewed on 23 March 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Bray, ed. *Tudor Church Reform: The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (Church of England Record Society: The Boydell Press, 2000), 10-15.



At the last when the day was passed, & that torches began to be lighted, the kinge myneding to breake vp this counterfect disputation saide vnto Lambert in this wise.

What sayest thou now (said he) after all these great labors thou hast taken vpon thee, and for all the reasons and instructions of these learned menne, art thou not yet satisfied? wylte thou lyue or die? What sayest thou? Thou haste yet free choyse. Lambert aunswared, I yelde and submit my self wholly vnto the will of your maiesty. Then said the king. Commit thy soule vnto the handes of God, and not vnto mine. Lambert. I commend my selfe vnto the handes of God, but my body, I wholly yelde and submit vnto your clemency. Then said the kyng, if you doo commit your selfe vnto my iudgement, you must die, for I wil not be a patrone vnto heretickes<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the trial the King was holding both “the sacred authority [*auctoritas*] of the priesthood and the royal power [*potestas*]”<sup>12</sup>. John Lambert submitted himself to the Supreme Head of the Church because religious leaders perform the examination of heretics, but immediately after the trial the King put on the secular crown of England, and condemned Lambert to death.

Following the examination, four days later, John Lambert was burned at the stake, on November 20, 1538. John Husee made it clear how great a precedent was set by this trial in a letter to Lord Lisle,

The King’s Majesty reasoned with him in person, sundry times confounding him, so that he alone would have been sufficient to confute a thousand such. It was not a little rejoicing unto all his commons and to all other that saw and heard how is Grace handled the matter; for it shall be a precedent whilst the world stands; and no one will be so bold hereafter to attempt the like cause.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of Matters most Speciall and Memorable*. 1536 ed. Book 3, 537. URL: [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3\\_1563\\_0537.jsp](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3_1563_0537.jsp) Viewed on 23 March 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Gelasius I, “Priesthood and Kingship.” Printed in Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church & State 1050-1300: With Selected Documents*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J : Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964), 15.

<sup>13</sup> J.S. Brewer and J.Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, vol xiii. (London, Kraus Reprint Ltd,1862-1910), 355.

Thomas Cromwell in a letter to Thomas Wyatt made a clear effort to point out how great the King was in his disputation with Lambert,

On the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. The King, for the reverence of the holy sacrament of the altar, sat openly in his hall at the judgment of “a miserable heretic sacramentary,” [Lambert]... “It was a wonder to see how princely, with how excellent gravity and inestimable majesty his Highness exercised there the very office of a supreme head of his Church of England”<sup>14</sup>

The main point of the trial was not to condemn John Lambert to the secular authority for death. Any bishop in England could have done the same sort of examination the King did. The most important part of the trial was to make it clear that the King was able to adeptly and expertly perform his duties as Supreme Head of the Church and do it in a very public manner. It was important to set a clear precedent of his power and capability.

The final precedent was set concerning the King’s power and authority as Supreme Head of the Church by February 1539 proclamation *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists*.<sup>15</sup> The proclamation paralleled Henry’s November 1538 proclamation by clarifying the religious practice of rites and ceremonies. The difference lies in the fact that the King pardoned domestic “Anabaptists and Sacramentaries” who “shall not be further troubled or vexed, but clearly acquitted from all worldly punishment therefor, upon trust that they will better regard not to fall hereafter into like folly.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> J.S. Brewer and J.Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, vol xiii. (London, Vaduz : Kraus Reprint Ltd, 1862-1910), 385.

<sup>15</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 278-280.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

This seems completely counter to his statement at the trial of John Lambert, “if you doo commit your selfe vnto my iudgement, you must die, for I wil not be a patrone vnto heretickes.”<sup>17</sup> In actuality, the pardon was not about heresy, it was about Henry’s authority. The reason behind the pardon is twofold. The first reason was because the king wanted to make clear his role as a shepherd to the English people.

And where of late certain Anabaptists and Sacramentaries, coming out of outward parts into this realm, have by divers and many perverse and crafty means seduced many simple persons of the King’s subjects...the King’s highness, like a most loving parent much moved with pity, tendering the winning of them again to Christ’s flock, and much lamenting also their simplicity, so by devilish crafts circumvented, and fearing also that great fear of extreme punishment might turn their simplicity to obstinacy, whereby they might perish and be lost out of Christ’s flock forever.<sup>18</sup>

With this, the king was able to place the blame on their heretical ideas and the reason his subjects followed them clearly on the shoulders of the foreign Anabaptists and sacramentaries. His people may have fallen victim but it was not their fault, they were simple and did not completely understand the truth. The King wanted to make an example of himself as the leader of his flock in the same way the Pope was considered the leader of his flock of Christians. Since Henry was second in authority only to God it was his job to make sure his flock did not lose out on salvation because he did not properly lead them.

The second part of the pardon was the most important. It was the actual pardoning of the people who had fallen victim.

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<sup>17</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of Matters most Speciall and Memorable*. 1536 ed. Book 3, 537. URL: [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3\\_1563\\_0537.jsp](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/3_1563_0537.jsp) Viewed on 23 March 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 280.

Of his estimable goodness, pity, and clemency is content to remit, pardon, and clearly forgive, and by this present proclamation remitteth, pardoneth, and forgiveth to all and singular persons, as well his grace's subjects as other, all such faults as they have committed by falling into such wrong and perverse opinions, by words or writings.<sup>19</sup>

The King remitted, pardoned, and forgave sins relating to religious matters and only one who had the true authority and power given by Christ would be able to do this. In the western world at this time, only the Pope would make the claim to this power. More than forgiving people, this pardon made clear the power the King possessed and could enact as Supreme Head of the Church. This is the only proclamation in the entirety of his reign, 1509-1547, in which pardoned and forgave people in a priestly manner.<sup>20</sup> The pardon was a statement of the power as Supreme Head and the extent Henry was willing to wield it.

The case is made stronger when we compare the language used in the pardon of the Anabaptists and language used in the Roman Catholic Mass. In the Mass each individual confesses to having “sinned too much by thought, word, and deed by my fault.”<sup>21</sup> The 1539 proclamation echoes this by saying, “all such faults as they have committed by falling into such wrong and perverse opinions, by words or writings.”<sup>22</sup> Instead of “deed” here the King probably decided to use “writings” because that is the primary source of action or deed that people did to spread heretical material into England.

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<sup>19</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 280.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-377.

<sup>21</sup> *Sarum Missal*. URL: <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Sarum/English.htm>. Viewed on 16 June 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-69), 280.

In the Roman Catholic Mass the priest then grants, “Absolution and remission of all your sins.”<sup>23</sup> The King used the phrase, “remit, pardon, and clearly forgive” which is very similar. The King was making a very clear demonstration of his priestly powers with this pardon. It was never about forgiving actual heretics. It was about Henry VIII demonstrating his priestly power as Supreme Head of the English Church.

The 1535 proclamation was a demonstration of the power Henry was willing to wield after the Act of Supremacy but was not completely comfortable using. He only became comfortable in 1538, once the Church of England’s formulary of faith was being finalized and he wanted to directly add his own opinions to the matter. The most important thing the November 1538 and the February 1539 proclamation accomplished, in coordination with the trial of John Lambert, was to make clear the power Henry held and was willing to use as Supreme Head of the Church.

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<sup>23</sup> *Sarum Missal*. URL: <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Sarum/English.htm>. Viewed on 16 June 2008.

## CHAPTER V

## EPILOGUE

In conclusion, the Anabaptists were important to Henry VIII and his government because they provided an easy symbol of heresy. They were a group of heretics that everybody feared. Henry VIII took full advantage of their status as universally hated heretics, and was able to use them to set the precedent that the New Church of England would not tolerate heresy. Henry was also able to clarify and increase his powers as Supreme Head of the Church by using the Anabaptists.

This process was initiated in 1534 when the Act of Supremacy removed the Pope's power in England and installed Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England. At the same time this was happening, a group of Anabaptists had taken over the city of Münster in Germany in hopes of establishing a new Jerusalem. Their method was brutal and violent. After Münster they became feared and hated for their heresies and the possibility that they could take over another town.

The reaction to Anabaptists was no different in England than most other places in Western Europe. Henry VIII issued the proclamation *Ordering Anabaptists to Depart the Realm* in March 1535, condemning Anabaptists and making it clear that foreign Anabaptists entering the realm would not be tolerated. To prove that he meant what he said, around 20 Dutch Anabaptists were burnt at the stake in England.

There was an interesting side effect to this proclamation that was probably not intended. It became the first time Henry VIII condemned heresy or a group of heretics after gaining the title of Supreme Head of the Church. The process to establish a new canon law for the Church of England was only in its infancy when Henry issued this

proclamation. Soon after, in 1536 and 1537, documents were passed by parliament to aid in the creation of the canon of the Church of England. These documents were the Ten Articles (1536) and *The Bishop's Book* (1537). They created the main formularies of faith for the Henrician Church of England.

The Anabaptists were used as part of each document, but only as examples of heretics who should not be followed. There was no punishment cited for anybody who actually decided to follow Anabaptist practices.

Things changed, however, in 1538. With the doctrines of the Church of England on their way to being finished, Henry decided it was time to step back in and assert his authority as Supreme Head of the Church. He did this by issuing the proclamation *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar* on November 16, 1538. This proclamation was to clarify some theological doctrines and make clear that “Anabaptists and Sacramentaries” would not be tolerated. It again made the Anabaptists targets as heretics that would not be tolerated, but made clear that punishment would occur if they were found. In coordination with the proclamation, three Dutch Anabaptists and an English sacramentary were burned at the stake.

The most important thing that happened along with the 1538 proclamation was the trial of John Lambert. He was a sacramentary, who had appealed to the King for his trial. The King could not waste an opportunity like that and used his trial to a public display of his increasing power as Supreme Head of the Church and also King of England. The King had a disputation with John Lambert on the subject of the Eucharist and at the end of the trial, Lambert submitted himself into the hands of the King because

he was unable to convince the King that his position was right. The King declared that Lambert would be killed. Through this trial Henry VIII was able to clearly demonstrate he had the power of *auctoritas* and *potestas*.

The final instance of Anabaptists being used as tools came four months after the trial of John Lambert and the November 16, 1538, proclamation *Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar*. On February 26, 1539, the proclamation *Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists* was issued. At first glance, this proclamation seemed counter to the four years of Anabaptist condemnation and punishment. Through this proclamation Henry VIII was able to demonstrate his power as Supreme Head of the Church. He pardoned, forgave, and remitted the sins of his citizen who had fallen victim to the Anabaptist heretics and heresies. He set a clear precedent as he exercised his powers that were similar and almost equal to the Pope.

Overall, Anabaptists were used as targets of the state. They served the purpose of being religious examples which people should not follow. Only in 1535 were they perceived as a real threat because of Münster. After that, the reaction to their heretical doctrines helped establish the canons of the Church of England and provided circumstances to increase the power of Henry VIII. They were the most recognized symbols of heresy and Henry VIII was able to easily use them.

In the end it was never about the Anabaptists actually existing and being a heretical force in England. Henry VIII decided to use their name and theology as a way to create and further the establishment of the Church of England and his own power. By



using them Henry was able to step in to the role as Supreme Head of the Church of England and make a clear demonstration of his power by forgiving them.

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