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Politics and Religion During the Rise and Reign of Anne Boleyn

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POLITICS AND RELIGION DURING THE RISE AND REIGN OF
ANNE BOLEYN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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ABSTRACT

During the 1520s and 1530s England endured a tumultuous time of drastic political change and religious reform. At the heart of it all was Anne Boleyn, whose relationship with King Henry VIII launched the English Reformation and the Royal Supremacy, and whose tragic end became a story passed down through the current day. This work examines Anne's life, particularly her religion and influence in politics, and the figures who shone and dimmed as she came to power and once she lost everything. Some of the most significant of these figures include Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, Hugh Latimer, and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Other members of both Anne and Henry's family are also examined, as their roles and the impact Anne and her relationship with the king had on them are also important parts of what makes Henry VIII's reign so fascinating and transformative, with after effects that are still part of England today.

INTRODUCTION

The life of Anne Boleyn, second wife of King Henry VIII of England and mother to Queen Elizabeth I, has fascinated audiences from her lifetime to the present day. The general story of her rise to power from lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine of Aragon, to becoming queen herself, and her execution by beheading less than three years later has been told and retold countless times, and as a result, many people can recognize her name and relate something they have heard, watched, or read about her. Instead of focusing on the well-studied tale of how Anne rose to become queen and what caused her fall from power, this work examines several of the most notable political figures who came to power or lost it all during Anne's rise and fall and studies the part Anne played in politics and in the lives of these figures. Religion, being so closely tied with politics during the early modern period, and especially in Anne's accession, is also a focus of this work. Accordingly, this study examines Anne's part in the changing religion of Henrician England and highlights the new religious men connected to Anne and who rose to power during Henry VIII's "Great Matter" and Anne's brief reign.

The particular figures examined in this work are several of the most prominent in Henry VIII's reign, and all of them are connected to Anne. The lives and careers of Thomas Wolsey, Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, Queen Catherine of Aragon, Princess Mary Tudor (later Queen Mary I), Thomas Boleyn, and Thomas Howard were all impacted by Anne, directly and indirectly. Anne's determination to become queen, and Henry's mutual determination for his divorce and for supremacy in religious matters in his kingdom, pushed England to the famous break with the Church of Rome, destroyed Wolsey and More's careers, catapulted Cranmer and Latimer into their roles as two of the most important manufacturers of the English Reformation, and allowed Thomas Cromwell to emerge as Henry's

second great minister. As the senior male members of her family, Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, and uncle, Thomas Howard received numerous gifts, offices, and titles from the king, while other members of her extended family she made part of her household once she became queen. Their triumphs were tied to Anne, and upon her execution, they lost most or all of their political standing. Henry VIII's family, particularly his wife, Catherine of Aragon, and their daughter, Princess Mary, lost all favor with the king, but despite criticism of Anne for her treatment of them, Henry is to blame for the worst of their miseries during Anne's ascension and reign. In Mary's case, even after Anne's execution, her situation only improved after she bowed to her father's wishes that she submit to his authority as Supreme Head of the Church of England. Anne Boleyn had a profound impact on many people during her ascent and fall, but it is on these most prominent figures, whose careers and lives soared and plummeted around her, that this work will present in the greatest detail.

Chapter one highlights the importance of position within the court, but deals largely with the Boleyn family's rise and swift descent, as well as examines Anne's relationship with Catherine of Aragon and Princess Mary, and her participation in their declining status. She did consider them to be burdens and roadblocks to her ascension, but it was ultimately King Henry who chose their treatment. Chapter two focuses on Anne's involvement in the disgrace of Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas More, which has been a topic of debate since her lifetime. This work shows that Anne was not as closely tied to Wolsey or More as previously argued; she did not lead an anti-Wolsey faction that did everything possible to discredit him to the king and that it was his own failure to obtain the king's divorce that sealed his fate, nor did she demand More's death for refusing to acknowledge her marriage to the king and the king's supremacy over the Church of England. Chapter three shows that she and Thomas Cromwell did not form a

partnership based on a desire to bolster religious reform. Both Anne and Cromwell believed in religious reform to varying degrees, and both still held some traditional Catholic faith, though with a few exceptions, and had little involvement with each other until the end of her reign when they disagreed on how to use the wealth of dissolved monasteries, and when Anne's position as queen would not allow for Cromwell's ideal foreign policy with the Spanish. Anne's religion and her role in the vaulting careers of both Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer is the subject of chapter four. She had direct relationships with both men, and her involvement with their careers was much more direct than any involvement with the destruction of her supposed enemies. Anne favored both of them, and the king himself acknowledged that Cranmer needed to be grateful to Anne for his position. Latimer did not have as much direct association with Anne in the beginning of his career's ascent, but his friendship with Cranmer placed him before Henry and Anne, who both came to favor him. Anne developed an interest in him and acted as his patron even after he was appointed Bishop of Worcester, and he, like Cranmer, managed to maintain his position following Anne's execution.

The decade of Anne Boleyn's life during which she rose from lady-in-waiting to queen and her eventual execution has been documented and researched extensively, but that is not the case in her early life. Because of this, her date of birth, birthplace, and even birth order among the three Boleyn children is not certain. It is most likely, however, that Anne was born in Norfolk, at the Blickling home of her parents, Thomas Boleyn and Elizabeth Howard. A common misconception is that Anne was born to a common merchant family, and while there was mercantile wealth in her family, by the time Anne was born, the Boleyns were of a higher standing. Anne's great-grandfather, Geoffrey Boleyn, had made his fortune as a merchant and served as Lord Mayor of London from 1457-1458. He secured an advantageous marriage to one

of the heiresses of a nobleman, Thomas, Lord Hoo. Geoffrey's eldest son William also made a strong marriage to Margaret Butler, co-heiress of the Anglo-Irish Earl of Ormond (also spelled Ormonde). William was knighted in 1483, served as a Justice of the Peace, and was an elite country gentleman. William's son Thomas married Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Earl of Surrey, one of the realm's premier noblemen, and through his marriage into the Howard family and the influence of his Butler grandfather, he entered royal service.¹

The year of Anne's birth causes debate; some historians date it to 1507, others 1501. The uncertainty surrounding Anne's birth also makes the birth years of her siblings, Mary and George, difficult to date. Alison Weir and Eric Ives both argue that Anne was the middle child, born in 1501, with Mary, the eldest, born around 1499, and George around 1503-1504. One of the most significant arguments in favor of Anne's earlier birthdate is that in 1513 she entered the service of Margaret of Austria. Had she been born in 1507, she would have only been six or seven years old, an extremely early age to enter into the archduchess's service. Further evidence to support 1501 comes from Lord Herbert of Cherbury's early seventeenth century biography of Henry VIII, based on contemporary sources, which puts Anne at the age of twenty when she returned to England in 1521.² Mary is believed to have been born in 1499, not long after her parents' marriage, for several reasons. Mary was the first of the Boleyn children to marry; she had returned to England from France while Anne stayed behind for several more years, and Mary's own grandson stated that Mary was the elder sister during his petition for the Boleyn earldom of Ormonde during Elizabeth I's reign. George is believed to be the youngest, though evidence to support that claim is also difficult. He is believed to have been no more than twenty-

¹ Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn, "The Most Happy"* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). 3-4.

² Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Arrow, 1995), 146-147.

seven when he joined the Privy Council in 1529.³ It was a young age to be appointed to the Council and to be sent to France as an ambassador, something that the French ambassador in England, Jean du Bellay, wrote, but thereby supports the belief that George was born around 1503-1504.⁴

Anne's father Thomas was a skilled courtier who had a successful career long before his daughter's relationship with Henry VIII. He entered royal service during the reign of Henry VII, Henry VIII's father, and had risen to the rank of squire to the body by 1509. He had some education, was the best French speaker at court, could also speak Latin, was skilled at courtly entertainment, particularly the joust, was loyal to the king, and was willing to take on a large workload. His abilities opened doors; he was ambassador to the court of France, attended the meeting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and attended the meeting with Emperor Charles V at Gravelines. Additionally, he participated in the Calais conference in 1521 and was an ambassador to Spain. He was so skilled with language and diplomacy that "Henry was to say in 1530 that there was no skilled negotiator to equal him."⁵ In addition to his work abroad, Thomas Boleyn was also an active member of the king's council, and his success there resulted in rewards: he was knighted in 1509, and received various offices, wardships, and grants of land.⁶ Thomas was also ambitious, and while on an embassy to the court of the Archduchess Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands, used his courtier's skill to secure a position of maid of honor for Anne in her household. Anne was sent to the Low Countries in 1513 around the age of twelve, became established in Margaret's household, and was tutored in the French language.⁷

³ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 146.

⁴ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 148-149.

Thomas had chosen an excellent place to begin Anne's training as a future courtier, as Margaret of Austria's court included her Habsburg nieces and nephews, and was so influential that "the elite of Europe vied to place their offspring as attendants on her and her charges in the knowledge that they would effectively be educated alongside Europe's rulers of the next generation."⁸ By using his skill as a diplomat and courtier, Thomas set Anne up for a promising life as a courtier.

In Margaret's household, Anne learned to speak French, learned essential courtly skills, particularly dancing, was exposed to various art and books, and excelled in musical pursuits.⁹ Anne's time in the Low Countries was short, however, and in 1514, her father recalled her from Margaret's household to join the household of Princess Mary, Henry VIII's younger sister. Princess Mary was being sent to France to marry King Louis XII and Thomas found a place for both his daughters in her household; Anne's new skills and mastery of French would be useful to the English princess in the French court. Anne was reunited with her sister Mary, and they were two of the few ladies allowed to remain with the new queen after Louis dismissed most of her English attendants. Mary Tudor's time as Queen of France was brief; Louis died only eighty-two days after they married. Mary Tudor quickly married Charles Brandon, her brother's friend and the Duke of Suffolk, before returning to England. Anne remained in France and served the new queen, Claude, wife of Francis I.¹⁰ There is disagreement about when Anne's sister returned to England. Some historians, such as Alison Weir, Marie Louise Bruce, and Carolly Erickson believe that Mary remained in France for several years, during which she became Francis's mistress and had many other affairs. Erickson writes that even two decades after Mary Boleyn

⁸ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 18-19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19-25.

¹⁰ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 150.

left France, Francis recalled her as “a great prostitute, infamous above all.”¹¹ Whether she stayed in France or left with Mary Tudor, Mary Boleyn was in England by 1520, for in February 1520, she married William Carey, a gentleman of Henry VIII’s privy chamber.¹²

Anne’s years in the French court transformed her into a fascinating young woman. She was dignified and poised, and “so graceful that you would never have taken her for an Englishwoman, but for a Frenchwoman born.”¹³ She wore French fashions and had excellent taste in clothing; was vivacious, witty, charming, intelligent, highly accomplished in singing, playing music, and dancing, and enjoyed participating in courtly pastimes; she also had a sex appeal that made her much more attractive than her physical appearance could by itself.¹⁴ Her most attractive physical attribute was her eyes, which were “large and black and she deployed them with practiced skill: ‘Sometimes keeping them in repose; on other occasions, sending them forth as messengers, to carry the secret witness of the heart.’”¹⁵ The French court had prepared her to make a grand debut in England, which came in 1521.

Anne’s recall to England in 1521 can be explained in two ways. First, relations between England and France were cooling despite the promises of friendship made at the meeting of the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520. Another significant reason was Anne’s importance in the marriage market. In 1515, Anne’s paternal great-grandfather, the Earl of Ormond had died, and had left no male heirs to inherit his earldom. One of his daughters, Margaret, was Thomas Boleyn’s mother, thereby giving him a possible claim to inherit the title, and he had already inherited most of the earl’s English estates. But Piers Butler, the earl’s second cousin, also laid

¹¹ Carolly Erickson, *Mistress Anne* (New York, NY: Summit Books, 1984), 30.

¹² Marie Louise Bruce, *Anne Boleyn* (New York, NY: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1972), 23.

¹³ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 150-151.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 151-153.

¹⁵ David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (Great Britain: Vintage, 2004), 263.

claim to the Ormond inheritance. Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Anne's uncle, suggested that Anne should marry James, Piers Butler's son, to settle the claim. Howard believed that such a marriage alliance would be advantageous, as it would link Butler more closely with the English elite.¹⁶ Negotiations for the marriage stalled, however, likely because Boleyn and Butler failed to reconcile their differences. Butler believed that he would be able to make good on his claim to both the earldom and the estates in Ireland, and Boleyn was confident that his favored position with the king would grant him the victory.¹⁷ Anne's failed marriage negotiation soon led to another marriage attempt, one that would have much more important consequences.

As in her early years, not much is certain about Anne's life between her return to England in late 1521/early 1522 until around 1527. However, the story of Anne's relationships with Henry Percy and Thomas Wyatt are some of the principal highlights. Anne attracted attention and admiration upon her return to England because "everything about her was French: her mode of dress, her manners, her speech, her behavior. Having lived in the most civilized court in the world, she stood out by reason of her wit, her grace and her accomplishments."¹⁸ Anne became one of Queen Catherine's ladies-in-waiting, and it was through her duties at court that she met Henry Percy, heir to the earldom of Northumberland, who was part of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey's household. The two became romantically involved and secretly agreed to marry. While Anne may have had genuine feelings for Percy, she was also ambitious, and marrying Percy would mean entering into one of the oldest and greatest earldoms in the kingdom. However, their secret agreement was discovered and the two were separated.

¹⁶ G.W. Bernard, *Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 11.

¹⁷ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 267.

¹⁸ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 155.

The reason behind the couple's separation is, like many aspects of Anne Boleyn's life, uncertain. The king was the key figure behind their breakup, but the reasons why are debated. The greatest source of information about the affair comes from George Cavendish, Cardinal Wolsey's gentleman usher and eventual biographer. Cavendish wrote that the king had become interested in Anne and wanted to remove competition, and so commanded Wolsey to put an end to the relationship. There is no proof that Henry was yet interested in Anne, however, especially since it may have been around the time that Anne's sister was his mistress. Wolsey would have been angered by Percy's rash decision because Anne was not considered a fit bride for the heir to the earldom of Northumberland. At the same time, Percy's father had been finishing negotiations for his son's marriage to Mary Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury's daughter, and such a pre-contract was as legally binding as a marriage. It is likely that Wolsey informed King Henry, who would have been angered that Percy sought to contract a marriage without royal approval, which was necessary for noble marriages.¹⁹ Retha Warnicke suggests that Cavendish misinterpreted the king's involvement. When Wolsey told Percy that permission to marry had to be granted by his father and the king, Cavendish may have mistakenly believed that the romance had been broken up because of the king's jealousy, not because of his anger for his noble subject's attempt to marry without his consent.²⁰ Percy and Anne were separated; he was sent home to Northumberland and married Mary Talbot. Anne was sent away to her family's home at Hever.

Using Cavendish as a source is problematic for several reasons. First, he wrote his biography of Wolsey in 1557, over thirty years after the Percy and Anne Boleyn affair. Second, he wrote in hindsight of the events that followed their separation. His claim that Anne swore, that if ever in her power, she would work the Cardinal as much displeasure as he had to her cannot be

¹⁹ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 157.

²⁰ Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 41.

verified.²¹ Having been a witness to Wolsey's fall and Anne's rise, however, he could write that Anne said those words and fit them into the part he believed Anne played in the Cardinal's fall. It is unlikely that Cavendish would have been around Anne when or if she ever spoke those words; and it is highly improbable that she would make such threats against the king's greatest and most powerful minister when she had no power or knowledge that Henry would soon begin pursuing her. Although relations between Anne and Wolsey did sour as his efforts to obtain Henry's annulment failed, Cavendish would not have solid proof that Anne considered him her great enemy before that point.

After having been away from court for a year or even more, Anne returned to her position as lady-in-waiting and soon attracted the attention of Thomas Wyatt. Wyatt was a poet and a courtier, son of Sir Henry Wyatt, Treasurer of the Chamber. Wyatt became clerk of the king's jewels in 1524, served as a diplomat from 1526-1527, and served as high marshal of Calais between October 1529 and November 1530.²² Many scholars believe that many of Wyatt's poems are about his feelings for Anne, but there is uncertainty about that. Eric Ives argues that only four can be confidently assumed to be about Anne. Poems about Anne aside, Wyatt was one of her admirers, and she enjoyed his company, but was always cautious in her dealings with him because he was married.²³ But their feelings did not matter, because soon the king made his interest in Anne known.

It is unclear when Henry began to develop feelings for Anne. If Cavendish is to be believed, that would place his attachment to Anne as early as 1523-1524. However, that is still during the period believed to be when Mary Carey (Boleyn) was his mistress, and it cannot be

²¹ George Cavendish, *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey, Cardinal Archbishop of York* (Middlesex: Kelmscott Press, 1893), 47.

²² Bernard, *Anne Boleyn*, 15-16.

²³ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 74, 77.

verified that Henry admitted to Wolsey that he had feelings for Anne, which according to Cavendish is why Wolsey ended Anne and Percy's affair.²⁴ Erickson and Ives argue that Henry's passion for Anne did not begin until around 1526 or 1527. This would put developing feelings after his affair with her sister had ended, and around the same time, if not before, that he began to have doubts about the validity of his marriage. Ives believes that 1525 is the probable year that Henry decided that Catherine should be put aside, because it is the same year that he brought his bastard son Henry Fitzroy out of obscurity and created him Duke of Richmond, as well as gave him precedence over everyone except any legitimate son that he might have.²⁵

Henry's well-known basis for the annulment of his marriage was on the grounds of invalidity because it went against canon law. He used Leviticus 20:21 as his proof because it states, "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing...he shall be without children."²⁶ Catherine was the widow of his brother Arthur, and although Henry and Catherine had had one son together, he did not survive. Although Catherine and Henry had a daughter, Mary, she did not fit into his argument; after all, sons were more important than daughters. Ives writes that by April 1527, Henry was consulting his advisors on the matter, and by May, took the first formal, though secret, steps to divorce his wife. There is one certain date that can verify Henry's intention to marry Anne, and that is in August 1527, when he applied to the pope for a dispensation to allow him to marry again. This dispensation would allow for the marriage even if the woman had previously been contracted in marriage, as well as cover any woman who was related to the king in the "first degree of affinity...from...forbidden wedlock."²⁷ Such a

²⁴ Cavendish, *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, 41.

²⁵ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 83.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

dispensation would allow Henry to marry Anne, regardless of any possible pre-contract with Henry Percy, and despite Henry's sexual affair with Anne's sister.

Accepting the evidence that Anne was Henry's intended wife by the time he petitioned for an annulment in August 1527, the best way to determine how long Henry had been pursuing Anne is through his surviving letters to her. Seventeen of Henry's letters to Anne survive, but are undated. However, in one of the letters known to be from the early stage of their relationship—determined to be so because Anne had yet to commit to him—Henry writes that he had been “struck by the dart of love” for over a year.²⁸ Based on his application for a dispensation from the pope in August 1527, the relationship had been going on since at least August 1526, and possibly in the earlier months of 1526. This puts the relationship after Henry Fitzroy's elevation to Duke of Richmond, and therefore after Henry's beginning doubts about the validity of his marriage. Nevertheless, when word leaked out about Henry's intentions to annul his marriage, many believed that Anne was the cause of his doubts on his marriage's validity. Weir does not believe that Anne was the cause of these doubts, arguing that Anne “was merely a catalyst, and the indications are that Henry would have pursued an annulment at some stage anyway, for overriding all other considerations was his desperate need for a male heir.”²⁹ That is to say, Henry's desire for an annulment was already strong, but his desire to marry Anne helped push him to starting the process in 1527.

Henry fought for his annulment from 1527-1533. The changes that were brought about by Henry's determination and anger were remarkable; the most notable was his break with the Church of Rome that began in February 1531 and was finalized in 1534. This break made the king the Supreme Head of the Church of England and meant that the English Church would no

²⁸ Bernard, *Anne Boleyn*, 24.

²⁹ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 171.

longer recognize the Pope, henceforth referred to as the Bishop of Rome. The Bishop of Rome would receive no allegiance from English bishops, nor would he enjoy any canonical jurisdiction in England. Parliament had immediately passed an Act confirming the king's new title, and effectively made Henry VIII "King and Pope in his own realm, with complete jurisdiction over his subjects' material and spiritual welfare."³⁰ In the spring of 1533, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, declared that Henry's marriage to Catherine was invalid, and that April, Henry informed his Privy Council that he was married to Anne, a marriage that had occurred in secret on January 25 of that year, and that he was going to have her crowned after Easter. A delegation was then sent to Catherine to inform her that she was no longer the king's wife, and was to be referred to as the Princess Dowager, the title she obtained after her husband Arthur's death.³¹

Anne's triumph lasted only three years. On 7 September 1533, she gave birth to Elizabeth, the only child she was to bear. Like her predecessor, Anne would not provide Henry with the male heir for whom he was so desperate. Anne's reign lasted until May 1536, when she was accused of adultery and plotting the death of the king, and arrested. She and her alleged lovers were found guilty and executed, the men on 17 May 1536, and Anne on 19 May. The reasons behind her dramatic end are the study of countless historians and students, but the majority agree that Anne and her alleged lovers were not guilty and were convicted on trumped up charges. The debate over why Anne fell and who was behind it still continues. Despite her brief reign, Anne's rise to power and her reign caused tremendous change among the players in English politics, the religion of the king and the kingdom, and in the relations between England

³⁰ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 222.

³¹ Bruce, *Anne Boleyn*, 211, 216-217.

and Europe, and it is because of this that this work focuses on the most prominent and religious figures whose careers soared or plummeted as a result.

Unsurprisingly, Anne's family benefitted significantly from her position as the king's intended wife and eventual queen, but also experienced tremendous loss and disgrace upon her death. Henry's own wife and daughter experienced humiliating, and even cruel, treatment by Henry more than Anne, for refusing to accept the legitimacy of his divorce and his eventual supremacy over the church in England. Those who could not, or would not, get Henry the divorce from his wife, particularly Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and his replacement as Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, were two of the greatest political victims of Henry's reign. But during this period came the ascent of Henry's second great councilor, Thomas Cromwell, as well as Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer, who in their positions as Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Worcester helped further religious reform throughout Henry's reign and into the reign of Henry's son, Edward VI. With the advent of these religious and political changes, which were wound tightly together, numerous other men were granted positions of power within the government and England's changing church. Not only does this work examine these changes, it aims to highlight what role Anne Boleyn played in them by focusing on her power, relationships, and influence in political and religious matters. This work will show that Anne had the most power as a benefactor and patron; she promoted her family and other men and women she favored and could provide for them directly, and in cases where she could not, she could sing their praises to the king and ask him to extend his favor to them. Oppositely, Anne is often credited as being a malicious political schemer who would stop at nothing to remove her enemies from power, but this was not the case. Anne had little to do with Thomas Wolsey and Thomas More's fates, and she was not the true source of Catherine of Aragon and Princess Mary's miseries; King Henry

was the person responsible for bringing down any impediments and opponents to his annulment and supremacy. Based on the evidence, Anne was a much more effective friend than enemy, and this work examines her relationships and involvement, direct or indirect, with some of the most notable figures in Tudor England.

CHAPTER ONE. FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ENEMIES

The King, the Court, and the Courtiers

In the era of the Tudors, the Court functioned as both the royal household and the main hub of political life. According to historian David Loades, the Court served two purposes: first, to be the domestic household of the monarch, and second, to serve as a vehicle to contribute to and display the monarch's "maiestas" (majesty). In a personal monarchy like that of the Tudors, those with the greatest access to the monarch were those with the greatest social status. Additionally, those with the greatest access were likely to receive rewards. Rewards could be financial and in the granting of offices or titles, but the greater significance was in the transference of honor from the giver, the monarch, to the receiver.¹ It was in a courtier's best interest to be in close proximity to the king, or if they could not, to have a family member close instead.

One of the best positions for access to the king was to be a member of the Privy Chamber, the branch of the court that focused on his personal needs and consisted of Gentlemen, Ushers, Grooms, and Pages, all under the command of the Lord Chamberlain. Additionally, the queen had her own Privy Chamber, in which all her maids and Chamberers were women under the command of the queen's Chamberlain. Unlike the rest of her Privy Chamber, the queen's Chamber's officers were men.² Although these men would not have had great access to the king, being in good standing with the queen could also lead to rewards, and it is likely that those in great favor with the queen would also have been in favor with the king. Under Henry VIII, the Privy Chamber also became an area of camaraderie; Henry often filled the ranks with his closest companions and intimates. Not all of these men were given titles, but because of their close

¹ David Loades, *The Tudor Court* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987), 3-9.

² Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 40-41.

relationship with the king, they were considered de facto Privy Chamber members.³ Being a member of the Privy Chamber, whether titled or not, was one of the ultimate positions of superior social status, and because of their constant access to the king, they were often in great demand as intermediaries and intercessors. These men were also useful to the king, who trusted them and used them as personal envoys able to conduct delicate negotiations within England and abroad.⁴

Maintaining status at court, and particularly a connection with the king, required courtiers to remain at court consistently, or to at least have reliable sources of communication within the court for when they were not present. Those with high political ambition, however, could not risk being absent from court, especially under Henry VIII, who generously rewarded those who pleased him. As his reign progressed, he created or destroyed nobles based on their attitudes towards his ever-changing royal policies and his suspicions about those who kept quiet.⁵ The fortunes of Anne Boleyn, her family, her supporters, and her enemies during the king's Great Matter and her downfall are prime examples of life at court under Henry VIII.

The Boleyns and Friends

Based on Henry VIII's pattern of generously rewarding those who pleased him and punishing those who lost his favor, it is unsurprising that the most obvious beneficiaries of Anne's ascension and the greatest casualties upon her downfall were members of her family. Before Anne caught the king's eye, her father, Thomas Boleyn, was already a very successful courtier and member of the king's council. Boleyn had been appointed Comptroller of the

³ Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 47-48.

⁴ David Loades, *Power in Tudor England* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 41.

⁵ Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 133-139.

Household in 1520, and had been made a Knight of the Garter in 1523. His elevation to Lord Rochford in June 1525 was part of a large ceremony in which several other men were elevated to the peerage or raised to higher ranks within it, and Henry's bastard son, Henry Fitzroy, became Duke of Richmond. Thomas Boleyn's elevation would certainly be a reward for his skill as a diplomat and courtier, as well as his importance as one of the king's most influential advisors, but may also have been influenced by the king's affair with Mary Carey, Thomas's other daughter.⁶ Anne's brother George was appointed to the Privy Chamber and in 1526, was married to Jane Parker, the half-niece of Henry VIII's grandmother, Margaret Beaufort.⁷ He was also granted more positions including Master of the Buckhounds and Esquire of the Body.⁸

Once Anne and the king decided to marry, Anne's family rose even higher. In February 1528, the struggle for the inheritance of Ormond was ended in favor of the Boleyns. Sir Piers Butler, despite being a loyal supporter of the king in Ireland, was only allowed to keep two manors, for a term of thirty years, and any lands that he could regain from the Irish. The Castle of Kilkenny and all the other lands belonging to the earldom of Ormond, the Butlers were required to rent from the Boleyns. Butler also had to relinquish the title Earl of Ormond, which he had been using since the last earl's death, but was made Earl of Ossory as compensation.⁹ Anne may have also had a role in her cousin Sir Francis Bryan's entry into the king's Privy Chamber, as he was one of her earliest supporters. After his entry into the Privy Chamber, he became highly influential because he rose high in the king's favor; he was one of the king's constant companions, and became one of Henry's favored opponents in gambling, bowls, and

⁶ Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2001), 235-236, 248.

⁷ Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 46.

⁸ Bruce, *Anne Boleyn*, 122.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

tennis.¹⁰ In 1529, Henry bestowed the temporalities, the landed income, of the vacant bishopric of Durham on Thomas Boleyn. The income from the Durham temporalities was vast, and Boleyn gained the grand London residence of Durham House. Boleyn was raised even higher when he was created Earl of Ormond in Ireland and Earl of Wiltshire in England on December 8, 1529. Along with his elevation to two earldoms, Boleyn was also given the office of Lord Privy Seal, the third highest office in the kingdom. The Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, was promoted to the bishopric of Durham, but was forced to resign from his office of Lord Privy Seal so that it could be passed to Boleyn. Furthermore, Tunstall had to transfer Durham House to Boleyn permanently, and would have to wait until March to collect the temporalities; Boleyn would continue to receive them until that point.¹¹ All the gifts heaped on Thomas Boleyn may have been rewards for his service, although it is likely that Henry rewarded him as a gift to Anne, as Boleyn's elevation also raised his children to the peerage. Anne became Lady Anne Rochford, Mary dropped her husband's name and became Lady Mary Rochford, and George was raised to Lord Rochford. In addition, George was sent on his first diplomatic assignment and left for France that same month.¹² Anne was made Marquess of Pembroke in her own right on September 1, 1532 in preparation for her journey to France with Henry to meet with Francis I and obtain his support for the king's annulment and marriage to Anne.¹³

As queen, Anne's influence grew even greater. Her beloved brother George, Lord Rochford, was created Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1534, served as one of the king's busiest diplomats, and was granted one of Thomas More's Kentish manors following his execution in 1535. The king granted Anne wardship of her nephew, Henry Carey, and she had

¹⁰ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 281-282.

¹¹ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 356-357, 366-367.

¹² Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 93.

¹³ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 158-159.

him tutored by the French poet Nicholas Bourbon. Bourbon also tutored Henry Norris the younger, and either Thomas or Edmund Harvey.¹⁴ When she became queen, Anne filled the ranks of her ladies-in-waiting with ladies of some standing, and a number of her own relatives. These women included Lady Margaret Douglas (the king's niece), Lady Mary Howard, Mary Boleyn (Lady Rochford), the young countess of Surrey, Anne Savage (Lady Berkeley), Elizabeth Boleyn, Elizabeth Somerset (Countess of Worcester), Margaret Shelton, her uncle Norfolk's mistress Elizabeth Holland, Anne Saville, Lady Zouche, Grace Parker, and Jane Seymour, whose post had been secured for her by Anne's cousin, Sir Francis Bryan. In April 1533, just before she had officially been proclaimed queen, she used her influence to bring about the marriage of her cousin, the Earl of Surrey, to Frances de Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford. In October 1533, another one of Anne's Howard cousins, Mary Howard, was married to the king's illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy, thus allying him to the Boleyns.¹⁵

When Anne was arrested on charges of adultery in May 1536, her brother George was arrested as one of her suspected lovers, as well as Sir Henry Norris, Sir Francis Weston, Sir William Brereton, and Mark Smeaton. All the men accused were part of Anne's faction of support at court. Norris was the Groom of the Stool, which made him one of the chief gentlemen of the Privy Chamber, a trusted member and the "'best-beloved of the King."¹⁶ Norris also held various other offices including Chamberlain of North Wales, Keeper of the King's Privy Purse, Master of the Hart Hounds and of the Hawks, Black Rod in the Parliament House, "graver" of the Tower of London, collector of subsidy in the City of London, weigher of goods in the Port of Southampton, High Steward of the University of Oxford, and keeper or steward of various

¹⁴ Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 147-148.

¹⁵ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 328-329, 314, 352.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

castles, manors, and parks. Weston was a member of the Privy Chamber and had been serving the king since 1525. He was dubbed Knight Companion of the Order of the Bath during Anne's coronation, and he was a favorite of both the king and queen, who enjoyed playing cards with him. Henry also often partnered with him during games of tennis and bowls. Brereton was also a member of the Privy Chamber, and a favored companion of Henry and Anne during hunts. He also received patronage from the king's bastard son Henry Fitzroy, and the Duke of Norfolk. George was a member of the Privy Council and the Privy Chamber, and he held the offices of Constable of Dover, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Master of the Buckhounds, and he served as a diplomat.¹⁷ These men were all close companions to both Anne and Henry, and held numerous political offices. In accusing them, Henry's trust in them would be destroyed, and they would be unable to provide Anne with any support against the charges. Additionally, if found guilty, they would lose all their titles and offices, leaving them open to new, seemingly more loyal, courtiers.

Of all the men accused, Smeaton was the most puzzling. He was not a gentleman, but had been made a groom of the Privy Chamber. He had risen to the position of Henry's musician strictly based on talent. He had originally been part of Wolsey's choir, but after the Cardinal's fall he was transferred to Chapel Royal. Henry liked him, supported him financially, and provided him with proper court attire. Rochford and the Boleyn faction had befriended Smeaton early on and drew him into their circle. Although he did not have political power, Smeaton did have an enviable status, as he was able to keep horses at court and even had servants who wore his livery. Accusing Smeaton would have provided shock value because of his low birth. Smeaton was also the only one of Anne's alleged lovers to confess to adultery with her; a

¹⁷ Alison Weir, *The Lady in the Tower: The Fall of Anne Boleyn* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2010), 101-108.

confession that may or may not have been extracted under torture.¹⁸ George Constantine, one of Henry Norris's servants, wrote that Smeaton had been racked, which is in contrast to the *Cronica del Rey Enrico*, which tells a story that Smeaton was forced to confess by the use of a knotted rope being tightened around his head.¹⁹ Because the sources are inconsistent, it cannot be proven that Smeaton confessed under torture.

Anne and her alleged lovers were tried for adultery, as well as conspiring to kill the king. Anne, Rochford, Norris, Weston, and Brereton pled not guilty, Smeaton pled guilty to the charge of adultery, but not to the charge of conspiring the king's death. All the men were found guilty and sentenced to death; Anne, despite providing an impressive defense, was also found guilty. The men were all executed by beheading on 17 May 1536, and Anne on 19 May. Anne's death and the death of her alleged lovers opened up positions for family and supporters of Jane Seymour, Henry's new love interest and soon-to-be wife. Additionally, Anne and George's disgrace and executions resulted in significant changes in the lives of their family and supporters. Anne's father was deprived of his lands in Ireland and stripped of his office of Lord Privy Seal, which was then granted to Cromwell, but he did retain his place at court and on the king's Privy Council. He remained at court and attended the christening of Prince Edward in 1537, helped suppress the Pilgrimage of Grace, and even lent his Garter insignia to Cromwell once. He died in 1539, a year after Anne's mother.²⁰ Anne's sister-in-law, Lady Rochford, temporarily retired from court. All of her husband's possessions had been confiscated at the time of his death, and she was reduced to begging Cromwell for financial help. She soon joined the new queen Jane's household as the lady of the bedchamber. When Thomas Boleyn died in 1539, her jointure was

¹⁸ Weir, *The Lady in the Tower*, 109-111.

¹⁹ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 326.

²⁰ Weir, *The Lady in the Tower*, 302-303.

restored to her.²¹ Mary Boleyn had been living in obscurity since she married William Stafford without consent in 1534; she was given Rochford Hall in Essex, where she lived until her death in 1543.²² Anne's only child, Elizabeth, was declared illegitimate and barred from the succession until Henry decided to restore her and Princess Mary to the line of succession in 1544. Elizabeth lived to become queen of England in 1558 and reigned until 1603.

Thomas Howard

Thomas Howard, Anne's uncle, was already a successful courtier and member of the king's council when Anne first came to the English court. At the time he was Earl of Surrey, but he became the third Duke of Norfolk upon his father's death in 1524, and inherited all of his father's estates, making him one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom. Although he was already one of the premier men in the kingdom, he was created chief of the Privy Council following Henry's decision to marry to Anne, and upon Cardinal Wolsey's fall from power, he became one of Henry's chief councilors and joint President of the king's council alongside the Duke of Suffolk. Possibly because of Anne's influence, Norfolk was granted the office of Earl Marshal from the Duke of Suffolk upon Anne's coronation; it had previously belonged to his father, the second Duke of Norfolk, but had been held by Suffolk since 1524.²³ It is possible that while Henry may have granted these titles and offices to Norfolk in part because he was Anne's uncle, it is also likely that he did so because he considered Norfolk, a seasoned courtier and premier nobleman from one of England's oldest aristocratic families, to be the right man for the job.

²¹ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 374.

²² Weir, *The Lady in the Tower*, 303.

²³ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 293, 333.

Despite being a member of Anne's family and possibly one of her beneficiaries, Norfolk's relationship with his niece was strained. Anne's temper was often short, and Norfolk felt the brunt of her anger on numerous occasions. The first indication of the estrangement between them came in 1530 when Anne blamed Norfolk for incompetence regarding the royal divorce. As Anne grew more powerful, she also grew more arrogant and proud, traits that made even her own uncle loathe her. Norfolk was not present at Anne's coronation, despite the prestige to his house, because he was on an embassy to France.²⁴ Upon his return his relationship with Anne continued to deteriorate, and it is recorded that during one of their fights she used "more insulting language to Norfolk than one would to a dog, such that [he] was obliged to leave the room.' The Duke was so offended he publicly heaped abuse on her: 'one of the least offensive things he called her was 'the great whore.'"²⁵ Further tensions between Norfolk and Anne were based on their different religious and political values. Norfolk was conservative and traditional in his religious beliefs and was disturbed by the break with the Church in Rome that enabled his niece to become queen, and that he was forced to support in order to protect himself and the future of the house of Howard.²⁶

Protecting himself proved to be something Norfolk was very good at doing; not only did he survive Anne's fall, he played a part in it. Norfolk was appointed Lord High Steward of England, a temporary office conferred on great lords for organizing coronations or presiding over the trial of peers of the realm who were tried in the court of the High Steward. Norfolk acted as Lord President over Anne's trial and her brother George, Lord Rochford's, trial. He, like the rest

²⁴ Derek Wilson, *In the Lion's Court: Power, Ambition, and Sudden Death in the Reign of Henry VIII* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 350-351.

²⁵ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 342.

²⁶ Wilson, *In the Lion's Court*, 345-346, 380-381.

of the jury, found them both guilty and sentenced them to death.²⁷ Following Anne's and her alleged lovers' executions, Norfolk retained his post of Lord Treasurer but retired from court for a brief period, though he was involved in putting down the Pilgrimage of Grace that same year. His success brought him back to court in 1537 in time for the birth of Henry's heir by Jane Seymour, Prince Edward, and he was named one of the prince's godfathers.

Norfolk continued his role as courtier and councilor, and found high favor once again when Henry married another of his nieces, Catherine Howard, in 1540. It was another doomed marriage, however; in 1541, evidence of Catherine's adultery and past indiscretions was presented to the king, and to save himself, Norfolk helped compile evidence and conduct interrogations of the queen and her lovers. Catherine, along with Francis Dereham, with whom she had an intimate relationship before she became queen, Thomas Culpepper, a groom of the Privy Chamber and her present lover, and Lady Rochford (Anne Boleyn's sister-in-law), who served as an accomplice to the queen's affair with Culpepper, were all executed for their crimes. Once again Norfolk survived and retreated from court following Dereham and Culpepper's trials.²⁸

Despite the Catherine Howard scandal, Henry still used Norfolk in various, and usually unsuccessful, military campaigns until in late 1546, he and his son were arrested for treason. Upon his arrest, Norfolk was stripped of his Garter insignia and staffs of office. His son, the Earl of Surrey was executed for treason, and Norfolk himself was sentenced to death but was saved by Henry's death on January 28, 1547. Norfolk spent the entirety of Edward VI's reign imprisoned in the Tower of London and was released by Henry and Catherine of Aragon's daughter Mary when she became queen upon Edward's death in 1553. Mary restored to him his

²⁷ Weir, *The Lady in the Tower*, 204.

²⁸ Wilson, *In the Lion's Court*, 466-471.

lands and dignities and he presided over Thomas Cranmer's trial for treason in 1553, and served unsuccessfully in Mary's forces against Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554 before retreating to his home and dying a few months later.²⁹

Queen Catherine, Princess Mary, and Their Supporters

Two figures who suffered greatly, and in more than just positions of political power, during Anne's rise and reign were Catherine of Aragon and Princess Mary, Henry and Catherine's daughter. Catherine refused to agree to the claim that her marriage was invalid because she was certain that it was a true marriage, and she was unwilling to give up her position as queen. Also, agreeing that it was not valid would make her daughter illegitimate and remove her from the succession. Catherine was also not without supporters. She was a very popular queen, and her plight generated sympathy with the public and many figures at court. When Anne traveled or went hunting with the king, villagers would "hoot and hiss at her, and on one occasion when Henry was riding alone near Woodstock, one of his subjects yelled, 'Back to your wife!'"³⁰ Catherine also had important allies at court, most notably John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, Thomas More, who became Lord Chancellor after Cardinal Wolsey, and even Henry's sister Mary, Duchess of Suffolk.

Bishop Fisher was particularly outspoken in his defense of Catherine and the validity of the royal marriage. He further refused to sign the oath of the Act of Supremacy that acknowledged Henry as supreme head of the Church of England because he believed that it was against God's will for Henry to be the Supreme Head of the Church, and his refusal resulted in

²⁹ Wilson, *In the Lion's Court*, 480-514.

³⁰ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 286.

his arrest and execution for treason on 22 June 1535.³¹ Mary, Duchess of Suffolk, was also vocal in her loathing of Anne Boleyn. She refused to go to court while Anne was there, and publicly referred to Anne in “‘opprobrious language.’”³² Additionally, the Duchess refused to travel to Calais with Henry and Anne in late 1532, and unsurprisingly did not attend Anne’s coronation in June 1533.³³

While Catherine and Anne resided at the same court they existed in a strange political love triangle. Henry, though it had been years since he had had affection for Catherine, kept her at court where they would continue customary, though hollow, exchanges as they had always done. Anne was constantly with Henry, but because she was not queen, she could not dine with Henry in public or be by his side on feast days. However, when Catherine kept to her rooms, Anne acted as though she were queen. She sat in the consort’s chair at feasts, wore purple dresses given to her by the king, significant because purple was a color reserved for royalty. Henry also spent £165,000 in a period of three years on extravagant gifts for her including “‘lengths of velvet, satin, and cloth of gold for gowns; furs; fine linen for chemises; and precious stones to adorn her clothes. There were also numerous items of jewelry.’”³⁴ Furthermore, Henry gave Anne the royal jewels that previously belonged to Catherine. He first asked Catherine for them in preparation for he and Anne’s trip to Calais. Catherine refused to give them up unless he ordered her to, and once he did so, Catherine complied. Anne was unfairly blamed and accused of tactless greed by Catherine’s supporters when Henry was the actual person behind the act.³⁵ It was important that Anne look like a queen for the trip to Calais, and to highlight the fact that

³¹ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 280-282.

³² Weir, *Henry VIII*, 305, 314.

³³ Wilson, *In the Lion’s Court*, 351.

³⁴ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 295.

³⁵ Antonia Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 184-185.

Catherine was not the true queen and had no right to wear the royal jewels. Catherine watched as Anne supplanted her, saw friends desert her, endured a forced separation from her daughter, and was kept isolated from the court from July 1531 until her death in January 1536.

In 1533, when the king's secret marriage to Anne was proclaimed and declared valid, Catherine was stripped of her title as Queen and told that she would from that time forward be referred to as the Princess Dowager of Wales because of her position as Arthur's widow. Catherine refused to accept the proclamation and the validity of the court that made it. Mary's title of Princess did not change until after the birth of Henry and Anne's child, Elizabeth, born on 7 September 1533. After Elizabeth's birth, Mary was stripped of her title, declared a bastard, and sent to live in the household of her new sister, who was called Princess. Anne Boleyn has largely been blamed for Catherine and Mary's treatment, but she cannot take all the blame. Henry was responsible for sending Catherine away and keeping mother and daughter apart. Henry was the king, and as such, believed that even his closest family members were his subjects, and it was their God-given duty to obey him.³⁶ Henry was also especially intent on breaking Mary's will; Catherine was much less a concern to him in her isolated establishment. Henry still held affection for his daughter, but would not stand for what he felt was a straightforward case of disobedience and he placed increasing pressure on her to conform. Mary placed all the blame on Anne, believing that it was her influence that made her father treat her so. However, Mary would learn after Anne's death that her father was the guilty one, as he did not relent in his cruelty to her until he forced her submission. Anne was not entirely guiltless; she was known to lash out against Mary and threaten to curb "her proud Spanish blood,"³⁷ just as Henry also raged against

³⁶ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 513-517.

³⁷ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 197-198.

Mary's "'obstinate Spanish blood'" and impertinent disobedience that she had learned from her mother.³⁸

Many of the stories of Catherine and Mary's treatment come from the letters written by Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador in England. He was a staunch supporter of Catherine and Mary, and despised Anne, referring to her as either "the Lady" or "the Concubine."³⁹ Chapuys' accounts are more than likely biased towards Catherine and Mary, and he often repeated rumor and gossip as fact. It has also been asserted that Chapuys did not attend many court functions, but he did dine with some of the king's ministers, and he had numerous contacts and an efficient spy network.⁴⁰ While some historians believe that Chapuys' reports are too biased to be viable sources, Starkey argues otherwise. He states that Chapuys did hate Anne, and that for him, there were no words too coarse to describe her, or motive too low or action too immoral for Anne. But while Chapuys hated Anne, he also seemed to be fascinated by her, and on several occasions was honest enough to admit when he was impressed by her courage and strength of will. Starkey does not believe that everything that Chapuys wrote should be taken completely as it is, but that Chapuys' willingness to admit some of Anne's positives makes him a more viable source than some historians have credited. Furthermore, he was careful about his sources; he tried to always name his informants, who included leading councilors, courtiers, doctors, and priests.⁴¹ But it also important to keep in mind but Chapuys' sources may have just fed him court gossip or incomplete snippets of information, and it was gossip he may have taken as fact based on his opinions of Anne; he would have likely been happy to believe that Anne was hated by the majority of the court and the country and to report that back to Charles V.

³⁸ Joanna Denny, *Anne Boleyn: A New Life of England's Tragic Queen* (Great Britain: Da Capo Press, 2006), 218.

³⁹ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 205.

⁴⁰ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 296.

⁴¹ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 359-360.

A particular instance in which Chapuys should not be taken as the most reliable source is in regards to Catherine's housing in the years she was kept separated from the king and court. Catherine would constantly write and complain about her misery and the terrible conditions she endured, but in reality, she was kept in comfortable residences. When she was first sent away, she was sent to The More, one of Cardinal Wolsey's former residences. It was showing some signs of neglect, but had been refurbished by the Cardinal and had been considered a magnificent residence just a few years before. Catherine was also allowed to retain a large household, including numerous ladies-in-waiting, and including her old friend, Maria de Salinas. Although she was moved numerous times in the last years of her life, she was always housed in relatively pleasant residences.⁴² Chapuys believed that Catherine was poorly housed, and in late 1533/early 1534 when Catherine was ill, he blamed her condition on her supposed poor living conditions. But in her household away from the court, Catherine had confined herself to her chamber, where she ate and drank very little, and only what her chamber women prepared in her chamber. Chapuys made it sound as though Catherine's deteriorating health was Henry's, or more likely, Anne's fault by forcing her into such unhealthy lodgings. However, Catherine's ill health was the result of her refusal to leave her chamber. Her lack of fresh air, exercise, and such a low food intake (for fear of being poisoned) broke her already declining health.⁴³

Despite her frustration, Anne made several attempts to create a better relationship with her stepdaughter. In February or March 1534, Anne offered to welcome Mary to court and reconcile her with her father, if she would only recognize Anne as queen. Mary refused, claiming that she knew of no queen but her mother, but that she would be grateful if the king's mistress would intercede on her behalf. A few months after that, Anne and Mary were in the palace

⁴² Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 180-181.

⁴³ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 590.

chapel together, and Anne was told by an attendant that Mary had acknowledged her before leaving. Anne immediately sent a message to apologize for not noticing and expressing her gladness that the two could perhaps now begin a friendly correspondence. Mary responded by saying that she could not have acknowledged the queen, for her mother was the queen and was very far away. Her curtsy had been made to the altar, not to Anne. Despite Mary's offensive response, Anne made at least one more attempt to mend bridges; only she waited until after Catherine's death. Anne offered to be a second mother to Mary, and only require minimal courtesies from her. Mary's response was as discouraging as her last two, in which she said that she would obey her father, but only as far as her honor and conscience allowed.⁴⁴

After Catherine's death in January 1536 an autopsy performed on her revealed that her heart had "'a black growth, all hideous to behold, which clung closely to the outside' and which did not change colour when washed in water; cut open, the heart was black inside."⁴⁵ Modern medical opinion attributes Catherine's cause of death to a malignant tumor of the heart, but to contemporaries, it appeared to be consistent with symptoms of poisoning. Chapuys was convinced that Catherine had been poisoned and that Anne Boleyn was to blame.

Catherine's death allowed Henry to take the first step towards renewing an alliance with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, which had been damaged by his divorce from Catherine, Charles's aunt, but he would only do so if Charles would recognize the validity of his marriage to Anne.⁴⁶ But Catherine's death did not soften Mary's resolve. She would have no part of Anne's attempted reconciliation, as it would dishonor her mother's memory. Instead, Mary took up her mother's fight and attempted to restore herself to the succession. It was a fight that Mary

⁴⁴ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 198-199.

⁴⁵ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 298.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 298-301.

continued even after Anne's execution. After Anne was executed, Henry made no moves to restore Mary to the line of succession and continued his ill treatment of her until she finally submitted to him and swore the Oath of Supremacy. This offers further proof that Anne was not entirely to blame for Henry's treatment of Mary during Anne's reign, and in fact proves that Henry was the larger culprit behind it; he was determined to break her and force her obedience.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 261.

CHAPTER TWO. THE UNFORTUNATE THOMASES: THOMAS WOLSEY AND THOMAS MORE

From Butcher's Son to the King's Right Hand

One of the most important figures in the first twenty years of Henry VIII's reign was Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey was the son of an Ipswich butcher, who used his intelligence and talent to make it into royal service as a chaplain of Henry VII. Upon Henry VII's death, Wolsey became part of Henry VIII's household and his career took off. He was appointed registrar of the Order of the Garter in April 1510, secured the deanery of York in February 1513, and gained the bishopric of Tournai in France for his part of the organization of the campaign in France. In March 1514, he became Bishop of London and was translated to York by September. On 10 September 1515, he was created a cardinal, and on 24 December 1515, became Lord Chancellor. In May 1518, Wolsey was commissioned papal legate in England, and became legate for life in January 1524. As papal legate, Wolsey gained extensive powers of supremacy, including the rights to make visitations, the power to appoint to any and all benefices in ecclesiastical patronage, to summon church councils, and to make new constitutions to the clergy and the men and women in religious orders. It also granted him ecclesiastical jurisdiction and precedence over the Archbishop of Canterbury, despite the fact that under normal circumstances, primacy lay with Canterbury rather than York. Also in 1518, he obtained the bishopric of Bath and Wells in conjunction with York. In 1523, he exchanged it for the bishopric of Durham, which he then exchanged for Winchester in 1529, while still remaining Archbishop of York.¹ He held his position as Henry VIII's chief minister until his fall from power in 1529.

¹ Peter Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1990), 1-4, 265.

The Great Cardinal's Fall

Wolsey's fall from power was the result of Anne's rise, and the cause of his dismissal is usually seen as the result of Anne and an anti-Wolsey faction at court poisoning the king's mind against his minister. However, it can also be argued that while Wolsey certainly had enemies at court, there was no conspiracy working against him. Those who believe that an enemy faction at court brought Wolsey down may have based their arguments on Cavendish's biography of Wolsey. As has been noted, Cavendish wrote that after Wolsey ended her engagement to Henry Percy, Anne swore vengeance on him if it were ever in her power to do so. Many historians use that phrase and the idea that Anne had a longstanding grudge against Wolsey to explain why Wolsey lost power. Elizabeth Benger, who wrote about Anne in 1850, and modern historians Weir, Bruce, and Starkey, all believe in the anti-Wolsey faction. The members of this supposed faction were Anne, her father (Lord Rochford at the time), her uncle (the Duke of Norfolk), and Charles Brandon, who was the Duke of the Suffolk and the king's brother-in-law. According to this view, some of the alleged hatred of the men in the anti-Wolsey faction came from their dislike that a man of such lowly birth could rise so high above them. While Rochford and Suffolk had only recently been elevated to the peerage, they came from a gentry background and believed that Wolsey was occupying positions that should have been theirs. Norfolk came from one of the oldest aristocratic families and would have been especially angry to see the son of a butcher more powerful than himself and he hated Wolsey for policies he enacted to humble the old aristocratic families.² An additional snub to Norfolk may have been that Wolsey was from one of his own territories in East Anglia; one of men who should have paid homage and service to his local lord had instead risen above him.

² Bruce, *Anne Boleyn*, 129.

Those who believe in the anti-Wolsey faction do not always base it off of Anne's supposed promise of vengeance for the break up of her affair with Percy. Simply wanting Wolsey's downfall for breaking up her engagement to Henry Percy does not seem likely, for if Wolsey had not done so, Anne would not have been free to marry the king and become queen. Alison Weir argues that although Anne may have felt some anger toward Wolsey for that event, she was more likely to have been angered by her father's removal from two prestigious and lucrative offices, for which she and her father blamed Wolsey. Furthermore, Weir argues that there were even more people at court who wanted Wolsey to fall, including Anne's cousin and supporter, Sir Francis Bryan, and several who discreetly supported Queen Catherine and desired Wolsey's loss of power, including the Marquess of Exeter, the Staffords, the Nevilles, the Poles, and the Duchess of Norfolk.³ She further claims that Anne and her faction continually worked to convince Henry that Wolsey was not working as hard as he could to achieve the annulment, even to the point that he was trying to prevent the Pope from ever granting it.⁴

In the arguments favoring the notion of Anne and an anti-Wolsey faction, it is important to consider the source of some of the information. Again, this leads back to Cavendish. His biography of Wolsey was written some thirty years after the events, and despite being a gentleman usher of Wolsey's household, he would not have always been present to hear some of what he claimed was said. His job "only required him to act as a cross between a social secretary and travel agent much involved in planning the frequent movement from place to place...until the special circumstances of Wolsey's last year, he was not close to Wolsey, and certainly not informed about matters of state."⁵ Therefore, taking seriously any mention that Cavendish made

³ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 284.

⁴ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 182, 194.

⁵ Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, xix.

about Anne's desire to ruin Wolsey, or the help of Norfolk, Rochford, and Suffolk, none of whom he mentioned by name when he discussed hatred of Wolsey by great lords of the council, must be carefully considered.⁶

Specific events or circumstances are sometimes used in an attempt to prove the workings of a conspiracy against Wolsey. The dispute between Anne and Wolsey over the election of an abbess for St. Edith's Nunnery at Wilton is a favored example. Anne's brother-in-law, William Carey, died of the sweating sickness in 1528, but before his death, he had sought the position of abbess for his sister Eleanor. However, Wolsey had learned that most of the nuns favored their prioress, Isabel Jordan, as the abbess's successor. William had turned to Anne for help, and Anne had turned to Henry. Henry himself informed Anne that an inquiry made into Eleanor Carey's morals revealed that she was a mother to two children, and in a letter to Anne wrote that he "would not, for all the gold in the world, clog your conscience nor mine to make her a ruler of a house which is of so ungodly a demeanour; nor, I trust, you would not that neither for brother nor sister, I should so distain mine honour or conscience."⁷ Henry would not allow a woman of such poor morals to become abbess, but promised Anne that a candidate other than Isabel Jordan would be chosen. Wolsey had gone ahead and confirmed Jordan for the position, much to the anger of the king, and he was forced to apologize to both Anne and the king for his actions.⁸

Another event that is made to sound like a growing plot against Wolsey came in the summer of 1529. Before taking his final leave of the king, Cardinal Campeggio, Pope Clement's legate, along with Cardinal Wolsey, went to join Henry, Anne, and the court on progress. When the cardinals reached Grafton, it became apparent that while Campeggio was given a chamber,

⁶ Cavendish, *The Life of Thomas Wolsey*, 49.

⁷ *Letters of the Kings of England*, Vol 1, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: Henry Colburn, 1848), 312-313. <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/henrytoanne12r.htm>.

⁸ Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 82-83.

no rooms had been prepared for Wolsey, who was only given chambers when Sir Henry Norris offered his own.⁹ It is also argued that Anne was furious when Henry treated Wolsey with affection, and to prevent Wolsey from regaining influence in a private meeting the next day, she lured the king away on an all day picnic, and he was never to see Wolsey again.¹⁰

Historians who do not blame Anne and an anti-Wolsey faction for the Cardinal's fall typically blame Wolsey's own failures as the cause of his undoing and work to show another side of the dispute over the election of the abbess at Wilton, as well as the events at Grafton. Although Henry's anger at Wolsey for electing Jordan to the position of abbess showed that Anne had the upper hand over Wolsey, it was not enough for Henry to take any further action against him. Anne herself wrote a letter to him pledging her loyalty and thanking him for the gift he had sent her as part of his apology. As for the story that no room had been prepared for Wolsey at Grafton, there are differing accounts. Cavendish, who wrote decades later, provided the story that Wolsey was not given an accommodation until Henry Norris gave his up. However, another one of Wolsey's servants, Thomas Alward, wrote an account of the event just five days after, and made no mention of Wolsey not being provided for. He did write that because Grafton was such a small house, both cardinals were lodged nearby.¹¹ Whether or not Anne worked to keep the king away from Wolsey by going on a picnic is unknown, but it has been argued that Henry had in fact met with Wolsey and his council during the morning that Cavendish claimed Anne had arranged for a picnic. After the meeting, the king went hunting, but not until after having bid farewell to Wolsey as he had always done. It has been suggested that

⁹ Elizabeth Benger, *Memoirs of the Life of Anne Boleyn, Queen of Henry VIII* (Philadelphia, PA: A. Hart, Late Carey and Hart: 1850), 231.

¹⁰ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 291-292.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

the entire meeting was a charade, and that Henry had been planning on dismissing Wolsey. If so, there is no need for Anne to have tried to lure Henry away for the day.¹²

Peter Gwyn also closely examines Wolsey's relationships with members of the supposed faction against him, and concludes that there was much less animosity and competition between the Cardinal and the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk in particular. Norfolk was one of the premier men of the realm and one of Henry's principal ministers, one of the only men close to Wolsey's equal; the Imperial ambassador even wrote to Margaret of Austria in 1525, "You know how powerful the cardinal and Norfolk are in this kingdom and how much confidence their master places in them."¹³ There is evidence of numerous communications between Norfolk and Wolsey, several of which contained Norfolk's requests to the Cardinal for some sort of assistance. If Norfolk so loathed Wolsey, it is very unlikely that he would keep in contact with him consistently, let alone ask Wolsey for help. Wolsey, although sometimes critical of Norfolk, wrote praises of him in his own private correspondence with the king. Norfolk himself wrote thanks to Wolsey for such praise and subsequent recommendation to the king to promote Norfolk to lieutenant of Calais and Normandy in 1525.¹⁴ If Wolsey saw Norfolk as an enemy, singing his praises to the one person who could dismiss him from court was an illogical way to try to bring down a rival, and it is unlikely that Norfolk would credit Wolsey with any of his promotions. In the case of the Duke of Suffolk, Gwyn argues that he and Wolsey could actually have been friends. When Suffolk married the king's sister without royal consent and fell from royal favor, Wolsey tried to help restore Suffolk to the king's good graces, and once achieved, he continued to offer Suffolk help and advice, particularly in financial matters. Suffolk corresponded with

¹² Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, 584.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 569.

¹⁴ 'Henry VIII: April 1525, 1-15', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London, 1875), pp. 538-556. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp538-556>.

Wolsey, and even into the late 1520s, the correspondence was friendly. Suffolk as a person also was not a likely candidate to help plan and execute a complicated political coup, for as Gwyn describes him, he was “as near as anybody in his position could have been to being apolitical.”¹⁵ Suffolk had not become a duke because of his political mind or actions, but because he was one of the king’s oldest and closest friends, and he preferred not to take on too much responsibility or hard work except on military matters.¹⁶ Historian David Loades argues that Wolsey actually did not have bad relations with the English nobility, and that he maintained good relations with Norfolk and Suffolk because they were both willing to work with him and support his policies, and it was other noblemen like Buckingham, Northumberland, and Shrewsbury who were not.¹⁷

Wolsey’s failure alone as the cause of his fall, therefore, is a reasonable assumption. Gwyn’s conclusion that “Wolsey’s fate depended entirely on the continuance of Henry’s confidence, and in particular in his confidence that Wolsey would be successful in his efforts to obtain for him a divorce” fits with Henry’s all-consuming divorce and its prominence in English politics.¹⁸ Anne, even if she disliked Wolsey, still needed him. At first, Wolsey’s steps in the divorce proceedings were going well, and Anne wrote him letters of her fond regard. In one particular letter, she thanked him for the “rich and goodly present” he had sent her, and “acknowledged the ‘great pains’ he was taking and promised to recompense him when she came to her crown.”¹⁹ Henry had believed that Wolsey was the man who could get the job done, and it would make sense that Anne would feel the same, indeed, it would give her a reason to try to

¹⁵ Gwyn, *The King’s Cardinal*, 571.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 571-572.

¹⁷ Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 152-153.

¹⁸ Gwyn, *The King’s Cardinal*, 582.

¹⁹ Wilson, *In the Lion’s Court*, 247.

keep a good working relationship with him.²⁰ Wolsey himself may have known that his career rode on his success, as there is evidence that other courtiers understood what Wolsey's failure would mean for him. Stephen Gardiner, Wolsey's secretary and later Henry's secretary, was one of these courtiers. In a letter he wrote to the English ambassadors in Rome, he stated that if the Pope "shulde aduocate the said cause, not only therby the Kings Grace and all his nobles shulde decline from the Pope and the See Apostolique, but also the same shulde redounde to my Lord Cardinall our comen Masters vtter undoyng."²¹ Henry's confidence in Wolsey's ability to obtain his divorce may have declined sharply after the disaster of the Blackfriars legatine court. The trial was Rome's attempt to make "a series of deceptive concessions to Henry's demand that the case should be settled in England by Wolsey and a visiting papal legate, acting with full authority delegated from the pope." The legate chosen, Cardinal Campeggio, was instructed to make as many delays as possible, but the proceedings began on 31 May 1529. The proceedings did not go far before the pope, Clement VII, recalled the case to Rome.²²

Wolsey's failure to accomplish his master's wishes pushed Henry to dismiss him, but he did so by making a point. Wolsey's dismissal in autumn 1529 was used to put pressure on the Pope and on the church in England.²³ Not only did Henry dismiss the man appointed papal legate for life, he also had him charged with *praemunire*, the offense of introducing an illegal foreign authority into England.²⁴ Praemunire was not a new offense; it was part of a group of statutes of Provisors and Praemunire passed between 1363 and 1393, "restricting papal rights to appoint benefices in England, and prohibiting the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction without the king's

²⁰ Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, 583-586.

²¹ *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History; Third Series, Vol. II*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), 156-157, <https://archive.org/stream/originalletters3s02elliuft#page/156/mode/2up>.

²² Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 96.

²³ G.W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 173.

²⁴ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 118.

consent.”²⁵ This choice of charge was very deliberate; Wolsey had been “in a very public sense the pope’s chief representative in England and it was the pope whom Henry was now anxious to get at...praemunire had become...part of an English tradition of opposition to papal pretension.”²⁶ Henry was sending a direct message to the pope through his minister’s disgrace, for to attack the papal legate was to attack the Pope he represented. Henry’s threats against the papacy had already made it clear that Wolsey’s ruin might be the king’s first step in the repudiation of Rome.”²⁷ Based on this evidence, Wolsey’s fall was not caused by a political faction at court, but as the result of Wolsey’s failure and the king’s lost patience.

Wolsey was accused of praemunire on 9 October 1529, to which he confessed and offered his possessions to the king before they could be confiscated, as the punishment for praemunire was the forfeiture of lands and goods. On 17 October, he was deprived of the Chancellor’s great seal and was forced to leave his palace and York Place and banished to Esher.²⁸ It seems clear that Wolsey understood that his failings were the cause of his ruin, but that he also knew he had a chance to regain favor. In a letter to Thomas Cromwell, he asked Cromwell if Anne’s displeasure was assuaged, as she would have been just as angry as Henry at Wolsey’s failure. Although the letter is incomplete, it is clear that he saw gaining Anne’s favor as the key to his return.²⁹ If Wolsey thought Anne was his great enemy, the chance that he could gain her favor and assistance was minimal. But if she was not such an enemy as some historians claim, then he knew that he had a better chance of lessening her displeasure than he did the

²⁵ Loades, *Power in Tudor England*, vii.

²⁶ Gwyn, *The King’s Cardinal*, 594.

²⁷ Lucy Wooding, *Henry VIII* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 150.

²⁸ Bruce, *Anne Boleyn*, 143-144.

²⁹ *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History; Second Series, Vol. II*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: Harding and Lepard, Pall-Mall East, 1827), 28, <https://books.google.com/books?id=8SIYAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:0104ySS4lXFIqdoYDonlKj&lr=#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

king's. This also shows how much influence with the king she had; that he valued her opinions so much she could potentially change his mind about dismissing Wolsey or any other servant who displeased him. But even if Anne wasn't his enemy, he did still have enemies at court, and in 1530 he was arrested for treason. The charges against him were very serious; he was accused of being in secret communication with the Pope in an attempt to regain his power. In addition, a papal brief had been issued to Henry forbidding him to marry Anne Boleyn, under pain of excommunication, and ordered him to banish her from court. It was possible that such a brief could have been published during Wolsey's enthronement in York, and for that reason, he was charged with high treason. However, on his way to the Tower of London, Wolsey fell ill and died on 29 November 1530, possibly from dysentery; he had managed to avoid the executioner's ax.³⁰

Thomas More: Lawyer, Humanist, and Courtier

Another important and well-known figure to fall from power as a result of Anne's ascent is Thomas More, one of the most famous English humanists and friend of renowned humanist Desiderius Erasmus. Son of Judge John More, he was born in London around 1478 and studied at Oxford before learning law at Lincoln's Inn. He became a lawyer in 1502, a Member of Parliament in 1504, and an Under-Sheriff of London in 1510. He became acquainted with Henry VIII when the king was only a child, and would enter the king's service in 1515 after successfully completing two diplomatic missions on Henry's behalf.³¹ More was a less enthusiastic courtier because he found court life superficial and disdained the trappings of wealth and power. But Henry "liked and respected him, valued his opinions, and would often ask him to

³⁰ Robert Hutchinson, *Thomas Cromwell: The Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007), 44-45.

³¹ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 144, 146, 199.

join him in his private apartments to discuss astronomy, geometry, divinity, and other subjects: sometimes at night he would take him up onto the leads of the palace, ‘there to consider with him the diversities, courses, motions and operations of the stars and planets.’”³² After the publication of More’s *Utopia*, which Henry admired, he was given a position in the Privy Council. In 1521, he assisted the king in writing a book, the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum adversus Martinus Lutherus* (A Defence of the Seven Sacraments against Martin Luther), in an attack on Martin Luther. Henry’s work earned him praise from the Pope, who conferred on him the title “Fidei Defensor” (Defender of the Faith). In gratitude, Henry knighted More and appointed him Under Treasurer of the Exchequer. More was chosen as Speaker of the Commons in 1523 and in 1525 was made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.³³ He remained in the king’s favor throughout the 1520s, and upon Wolsey’s dismissal, he was appointed Lord Chancellor of England, although it was a position he did not want because he had no desire to become involved with the king’s Great Matter, which he opposed.³⁴

More was a staunch Catholic, so much so that in his youth he had considered becoming a member of the clergy. During the 1520s, he was greatly alarmed by the reformist religious ideas spreading throughout Europe and England and used his power as Lord Chancellor to strike back against heresy in England. More’s preoccupation with the pursuit and examination of suspected heretics, in addition to his support of Church hierarchy, kept him largely out of political life despite being Chancellor.³⁵

More’s role as Chancellor and even his determined fight against heresy was not enough to keep him from resigning from his post as Lord Chancellor and returning the Great Seal in

³² Weir, *Henry VIII*, 199.

³³ *Ibid.*, 231-232.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 293-294.

³⁵ Wilson, *In the Lion’s Court*, 291-292.

1532 after the submission of the clergy. He could no longer reconcile his conscience to Henry's reforms within the Church in England, which went against his beliefs in loyalty to the authority of the pope and the Catholic Church. He was also one of Catherine of Aragon's supporters and while he was loyal to the king, he did not want any involvement in his plans to marry Anne.³⁶

The End of Thomas More

More's resignation as Lord Chancellor was not the end of his involvement with Henry VIII. He refused to sign the oath of the Act of Succession that declared the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn valid and settled the succession on her daughter Elizabeth, and also bastardized Catherine of Aragon's daughter Mary. Swearing the oath was confirmation of the law that

the royal issue begotten now or in the future of the bodies of our fearsome lord the King, and the lady Anne his consort, Queen of England, should be considered first and most fit to the imperial crown of this region of England; whereby it is established that all and singular should swear a corporal oath to undertake to fulfill all that is in the same Act, on whose observance the good fortune of this realm is founded.³⁷

That refusal, as well as his refusal to swear the oath of the Act of Supremacy, which acknowledged Henry as supreme head of the Church of England, was an act of treason and he was arrested in April 1535. Bishop Fisher had also refused to sign the oaths; he was a long-standing, outspoken supporter of Catherine and believed that it was against God's law for Henry to be the supreme head of the Church. Fisher was beheaded for treason on 22 June 1535, and More suffered the same fate on 6 July 1535.

More and Fisher's executions caused shock and horror across Europe, and Anne was blamed for their deaths. Placing the blame on Anne would indicate that she was actively involved in making the policy and determining its punishment, but there is no proof that she had

³⁶ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 222-223.

³⁷ Oath of Allegiance to Henry VIII and His Successors, 1534, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/citizen_subject/transcripts/oath_allegiance.htm.

any part in it. There is also little evidence detailing Anne's relationship with Thomas More. Although More was Lord Chancellor, he did not have the role of the king's primary councilor like Wolsey, nor was he involved in the effort to obtain the king's divorce, and this would have limited his interaction with Anne. Some historians argue that Anne saw More as her enemy, but he never actively worked against the king's divorce. Although he supported Queen Catherine and the hierarchy of the Church, he insisted that he never opposed the king's divorce, that he would "neither murmur at it, nor dispute upon it" and that he did not oppose the king's supremacy, just the insistence that he swear an oath imposed by civil authorities.³⁸ More likely than the supposed great animus between Anne and Thomas More, is that it was Henry's need to bend people to his will and his anger over the opposition to his marriage and policies that drove him to execute Fisher and More.³⁹ Henry had also been furious about Fisher and More's involvement with Elizabeth Barton, the Maid of Kent.

Elizabeth Barton was a serving girl from Kent who attracted attention for seemingly entering into a trance-like state during which she spoke of heavenly things and uttered prophecies. Men and women flocked to her for her blessing, prayers, or predictions about their future, and she soon began making pronouncements on various religious issues. Many of Catherine's supporters looked to Barton for divine revelation about the divorce, and she prophesized that Henry would soon die a horrible death if he continued with his plans for the divorce and his marriage to Anne.⁴⁰ Both Fisher and More met with her; Fisher was convinced that God was acting through her, and while More was more skeptical, he sought her out more than once because he saw her as a defender of the old faith, who if compromised, would put its

³⁸ Denny, *Anne Boleyn*, 222, 237.

³⁹ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 280-282.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *In the Lion's Court*, 365-367.

cause in jeopardy.⁴¹ But when Anne and Henry wed and remained in excellent health, Barton claimed that Henry had been deposed by God and was no longer king in God's eyes. This daring but foolish proclamation led to her arrest and examination, during which she confessed that all her visions and prophesies were lies, and she named many of her supporters. Barton and her supporters were convicted and executed; both Fisher and More were able to escape her downfall, but Derek Wilson argues that Henry was shaken and furious about the whole affair and wanted Thomas More executed with her. He argues that Henry's affection for More had long since turned to hatred, and he was angry that he could not prove More guilty in Barton's treason. Thomas More's own son-in-law, William Roper, wrote a biography of his father-in-law after his execution, and if Anne and Thomas More were such great enemies, it stands to reason that Roper would acknowledge their animosity and her role in More's disgrace and execution, and place the blame of More's death on her. Roper acknowledged that Henry was already displeased at Thomas More over his involvement with Elizabeth Barton but limits Anne's role in More's downfall to encouraging Henry to force the Act of Supremacy on him where he previously had not. Anne, Roper claims, did "so exasperate the King against him, that, contrary to his former resolution, he caused the oath of supremacy to administered unto him, who, albeit he made a discreet qualified answer, nevertheless was forthwith committed to the Tower."⁴² Although Anne may have pushed for More to have to swear the Oath, there is no proof that she did so with the intent to have him executed. Even Eustace Chapuys, who was always quick to lay blame on Anne for unpopular policies and cruelties, did not claim that Fisher and More's deaths were her responsibility.⁴³ It is entirely possible that Anne, and Henry as well for a time, wanted him to

⁴¹ Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More* (New York, NY: Nan A. Talese, Doubleday, 1998), 345.

⁴² William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, (England: 1556), <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/16Croper-more.asp>.

⁴³ Denny, *Anne Boleyn*, 237.

take the oath because in doing so, it would have been a victory for them: a respected figure like More on their side would have sent a poignant message to the pope about the king's power and validity of his control over the Church in England. It was only after More and Fisher both refused to swear to the Act of Succession and the Act of Supremacy that Henry took decisive action. Fisher and More were both tried and found guilty of treason, and with their deaths, Henry achieved what he wanted: the destruction of two of the most important political and religious figures in England who resisted his will.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Wilson, *In the Lion's Court*, 368-371, 379.

CHAPTER THREE. THOMAS CROMWELL: THE RISING STAR

Early Career and Wolsey's Service

One of the greatest men to come to power during Anne's rise and reign was Thomas Cromwell. Like Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell came from humble beginnings—he was the son of a Putney brewer—and through his talents and connections, he rose to become one of Henry VIII's chief ministers. Unlike Wolsey, Cromwell flourished during Anne's tenure as Henry's intended and eventual queen. It was through his own skills in finance and legal matters displayed during his time as Wolsey's employee that he achieved his eventual rank, not from any personal connection with Anne or the Boleyns. As a young man, Cromwell had built up successful businesses as a cloth merchant, as well as in money lending and law. He successfully obtained a client base among “the rich and famous as both open-handed creditor and a shrewd and perspicacious advocate,”¹ despite likely being a self-taught lawyer, meaning he had followed the common path of obtaining legal knowledge through service to another lawyer instead of receiving formal training.

Cromwell being a self-taught lawyer is important to note when examining his eventual role as the king's minister and supposed mastermind of the royal divorce. Michael Everett argues that because he had no formal legal training, that despite his excellent grasp of the law, it is worth questioning whether he was fully able to comprehend some of the “more detailed and substantive law and jurisprudence to quite the extent as did more senior members of the legal profession.”² Additionally, after he entered royal service in the 1530s he sometimes had to seek advice from more prominent men like Thomas Audeley. This evidence casts doubt on the extent

¹ Hutchinson, *Thomas Cromwell*, 12.

² Michael Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell: Power and Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 20.

of the perceived revolutionary genius that historians like Geoffrey Elton have granted him, and also on his role in the king's Great Matter. Furthermore, if Cromwell was such an essential figure to obtaining the king's divorce, it is likely that he would have been discovered before Cardinal Wolsey fell from power. The king, Wolsey, Anne and the Boleyns, and numerous others were involved in the Great Matter, and if Cromwell had presented any groundbreaking ideas Wolsey would have been desperate to present them to the king, and Anne and her family would likely have pulled Cromwell into their circle as they did with Thomas Cranmer.

By the time Cromwell entered into Wolsey's service, probably in the year 1524, he was a successful solicitor handling other people's legal affairs and providing legal advice, including the affairs of numerous gentry and noblemen. He also worked for several members of the clergy, served in the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber, and had obtained a seat in Parliament more than once throughout the 1520s and had drafted numerous bills. However, it was his work for Wolsey that allowed for his advancement and was key to his political career when he entered into royal service. This work came in the form of Wolsey's establishment of a college at Oxford and a grammar school in his native town of Ipswich. In order to establish and fund these schools, Wolsey secured papal and legal approval to suppress twenty-nine English religious houses between 1524 and 1529, and it was Cromwell's responsibility to survey the lands, possessions, and properties of the religious houses intended for dissolution, and he was also an important part of the legal process to dissolve the chosen monasteries. He was present at numerous religious communities' formal surrenders, assisted in ensuring that ownership of land transferred to Wolsey, and pensioned off the men of the dissolved monasteries quickly and quietly. Once Wolsey had possession of the lands, Cromwell assisted in drafting the deeds that formally established the colleges; he was also responsible for drafting letters patent for the license to

found Cardinal College, and drafts of licenses granting the use of the suppressed monasteries to fund the college's establishment and revenue. Pleased by his success, Wolsey promoted him to his private council, and by 1529, he was a senior figure in Wolsey's administration.³ None of the work Cromwell did for Wolsey involved helping the Cardinal in his task of obtaining the king's divorce, therefore it is unlikely that he ever stood out to Henry and Anne in the way that Thomas Cranmer did, if they even knew of him at all. Rather it was his excellent work in financial and accompanying legal matters that enabled him to survive his master's disgrace and transition into royal service.

When Cardinal Wolsey fell from power in 1529, Cromwell likely worried about his own fate and what his master's fall meant for his career. George Cavendish wrote that he spoke to Cromwell at the time of Wolsey's fall, and that Cromwell tearfully muttered his fears about what would become of him after his years of devoted service to his master, fearing that he would be left with nothing.⁴ Despite these fears and this supposed admission of them, Cavendish does not record that Cromwell placed any blame on Anne for the Cardinal's, and his own, plight. If Anne and Wolsey were such great enemies, Wolsey's right-hand man would likely have felt the same. It would make sense that he would blame Anne for their misfortune, and Cavendish, who did see Anne as the cause of Wolsey's disgrace, would not have failed to record any extra evidence against her. Cromwell rightfully feared for himself, but there is also ample proof that he feared for his master and remained loyal to him throughout the Cardinal's year in disgrace. Cromwell worked diligently on behalf of the Cardinal, soliciting members of the court on his behalf, defending him in Parliament, drafting letters to the king from Wolsey, and fulfilling non-political tasks. Cromwell may have even been a part of Wolsey's early, and brief, attempts to mount a

³ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 20-22, 27-36, 43-45.

⁴ Wilson, *In the Lion's Court*, 269.

defense against the praemunire charges against him. Wolsey was aware of Cromwell's loyalty and reached out to him for continued help, referring to Cromwell as "Myn onely ayder in thys myn intolerable anxiete and heuynes," as well as writing to Cromwell "without yow I can do no thing."⁵ While this loyalty may have come from a genuine concern for his master's fate, it was probably also practical because many at court expected that Wolsey would make a comeback. The king himself left the possibility open; he granted Wolsey a pardon in February 1530 and sent him occasional gifts as a sign of his goodwill, and even before Wolsey's pardon, Henry had sent his own doctors to treat the Cardinal when he fell ill in December 1529.⁶

Cromwell continued his work on behalf of the Cardinal even after he entered royal service in 1530. His first work for the king was the result of his knowledge and work with Wolsey's colleges, which Henry wanted to appropriate since they were forfeit upon Wolsey's confession to the charge of praemunire. It was Cromwell's efficient handling of the arrangements for these lands that impressed the king and allowed him to transition into royal service, even to become a member of the King's Council by 1531.⁷

In Service to the King

Cromwell's successful transition into royal service not only highlights his personal talents, but also provides evidence against the idea of the anti-Wolsey faction supposedly headed by Anne, Thomas Boleyn, and the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk. If Anne was so against Wolsey, it is unlikely that she would want his loyal servant Cromwell to enter royal service. Cromwell was clearly known to be loyal to the Cardinal, and if Wolsey was such a great enemy

⁵ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 53.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 64-68.

of Anne's, it is likely that she would have known about Cromwell and would have fought to keep him away from Henry so as to keep him from petitioning on Wolsey's behalf. Since there is no evidence that Anne fought against Cromwell's appointment, it appears that she had no animosity against him despite his efforts to help the Cardinal. This could mean that she either did not know Cromwell, or that she knew him, but did not hate Wolsey as many historians have claimed. If Anne did not hate Wolsey, then if any such anti-Wolsey faction existed, Anne would not have been at the head of it and cannot be blamed for the Cardinal's downfall.

Much has been written about Cromwell's work for king, especially his ideas concerning the king's Great Matter. But in his first years as one of the king's councilors, Cromwell did not have any involvement in the royal divorce, and was actually put to work in matters regarding Crown lands. It was his exceptional work in these dealings that allowed him to rise high in the king's service. It was work that demonstrated his legal and administrative skills, skills necessary to become one of the king's principal financial agents as the negotiations for a series of land exchanges that were very complex. Throughout most of 1531, Cromwell was occupied with the redistribution of former college lands, many of which were sold or given by the king as rewards or patronage, and with the collection of rent from Wolsey's former college lands. Additionally, Cromwell worked as one of the coordinating ministers for the land exchanges enabling the king's new building projects, many of which were a result of Henry's acquisition of Wolsey's former residences. Cromwell was also the principal agent in matters regarding Wolsey's former college at Oxford.⁸

It was Cromwell's financial and administrative knowledge and skills in regard to the crown's landed interest, and it is not surprising that the earliest offices Henry granted him were

⁸ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 73-81.

all financial: master of the king's jewels, clerk of the hanaper, and chancellor of the exchequer. He became a master in handling the crown lands, such that at times, Henry would not make a decision regarding land until he had the chance to discuss it with Cromwell. Land acquisition was not the only work he was involved in, but it made up the majority of his work in his early years of royal service. A document written by Cromwell himself lists thirty-three tasks that he managed in his first years, of which nineteen were matters of land acquisition and four were in regards to building projects. It is significant to note that there was nothing in this list of tasks pertaining to the king's Great Matter or the royal supremacy, firmly supporting Michael Everett's conclusion that Cromwell did not start his work on the king's divorce immediately upon his entry into royal service.⁹

In addition to handling the financial and administrative process regarding Crown land, Cromwell also handled financial and administrative details in the Crown's ecclesiastical interests. This work included the appointment of new bishops, handling the fines of new bishops in the sees of York and Winchester, managing the inquests and collection of revenues owed to the king while bishoprics were vacant, and handling the fines paid to the Crown by individual clergy members, including payments by the clergy following the general pardon of 1531, and the fines individuals owed after charges of praemunire. Furthermore, he was involved with Church jurisdictional matters, which would become especially important when Henry broke away from the Church of Rome. Cromwell was also involved with royal interference in monastic houses and elections, a position that eventually put him at odds with Anne, who disagreed with how the revenue collected from dissolved monasteries should be used. But by 1534, Cromwell was a master over the affairs of monastic houses and had become the king's personal secretary, and in

⁹ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 81-90.

1535, Henry appointed him vicegerent in spirituals, as well as Vicar-General and Visitor-General of the Monasteries.¹⁰

Famously considered the mastermind behind the break with Rome, Cromwell would have needed to be working on the king's Great Matter early into his entry into Henry's service. As shown, this was not the case. Henry had already had the idea that he could break away from the Church in Rome and declare his supremacy, although it was not what he wanted for the majority of his struggle to obtain his annulment. What he did want was papal recognition of the invalidity in God's eyes of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and that therefore he was free to marry someone else. As early as 1515, Wolsey mentioned to the English ambassador in Rome that the pope would have no better friend than Henry, provided he complied with Henry's desires. In that same year, Henry himself told the Venetian ambassador that he was the pope's "'good son,' but that he also had 'sufficient power with the pope to warrant hopes of my making him adhere to whichever side I choose.'"¹¹ Another similar instance involved the recently conquered territory of Tournai in 1517 when the pope promulgated bulls in support of the territory's deposed bishop-elect. Henry was furious because he believed that as king, he had supreme power in Tournai and did not recognize a superior. By the late 1520s, both Wolsey and Stephen Gardiner warned the pope that the king was determined to satisfy his conscience and that if the pope would not comply with his wishes then he would make do without him. Clearly, Henry was well aware that he had the option to take independent action, and while Cromwell was not a mastermind, he was still a very important figure in the divorce process because of his work in drafting the Reformation statutes, in producing and disseminating propaganda to support the king's actions,

¹⁰ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 100-119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

and enforcing government policies in the localities.¹² Additionally, Cromwell's legal knowledge and Parliamentary experience proved useful in expanding and redefining treason laws. The Treason Act of 1534 established that treason expanded beyond the "overt deed" of treason established in 1352, to include opposition "by writing or imprinting." It was further covered through the Succession Act of 1534, considering writing and even speaking in opposition to the Boleyn marriage and succession as acts of treason punishable by imprisonment and the loss of all possessions. It was through these acts that Bishop Fisher and Thomas More's refusal to swear the Oaths of Succession and Supremacy was considered an act of treason and allowed Henry to execute them.¹³ Cromwell's rise to his position of the king's right hand was a result of his early work for the king dealing with Crown lands and his later efforts in drafting new legislation in support of the Boleyn marriage.

Based on the evidence, Everett's conclusion that Cromwell did not begin his work on the divorce until 1532, and that his main role was drafting, correcting, and amending much of the parliamentary legislation that helped implement the break with Rome, seems correct. Because he helped Henry devise and then put in place the necessary legislation to divorce Catherine, he was less a policy formulator and more its principal executor. It is also important to note that Cromwell did not always work alone. On numerous occasions, he worked closely with Thomas Audeley, the Lord Chancellor. The evidence suggests that on some of the legislation drafted regarding the divorce, it was Audeley who took the lead. Audeley was responsible for drafting the earliest version of the Act in Restraint of Appeals, not Cromwell. Cromwell worked with Audeley and also edited and corrected parts of Audeley's draft. Audeley also amended or drafted

¹² Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 206, 212-213.

¹³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Revolutionary Life* (New York, NY: Viking, 2018), 245-246.

several other bills connected to the schism.¹⁴ Again, this points to the fact that Cromwell was not the mastermind behind the divorce and the schism. But his aptitude and skills, as well as his ability to handle an ever-increasing workload made him a valuable resource for the king, and an important councilor.

Cromwell and Anne

Common historical interpretation of Thomas Cromwell's religious beliefs places him in firmly in the reformer category. But while the common narrative is that Cromwell was deeply interested in radical reform, Michael Everett argues that Cromwell's religious ideas are actually much more difficult to determine. Cromwell did not produce any writings with personal religious opinions, and despite being Henry's Vice-Gerent in spirituals and his place in presiding over convocation, he did not offer any opinions on matters of doctrine. Cromwell's will in 1529 followed many traditional beliefs, such as invoking the Virgin Mary to be an intercessor for his soul. Additionally, there is evidence in some of his letters to Wolsey that he disliked Martin Luther, and that he had confiscated heretical books from a Lutheran sect. Cromwell also owned a number of traditional religious images depicting the Virgin Mary and several saints. Everett also points out that Eustace Chapuys, who was quick to brand Anne and her family as Lutherans, his catch-all term for anyone whose religion he disapproved of, does not refer to Cromwell as a Lutheran.¹⁵ Additionally, there is evidence of a relationship with Thomas More. In a letter More wrote to the king following the Elizabeth Barton affair, More referred to Cromwell as the king's "trusty Counsailor" and wrote that he had written to Cromwell to declare his truth, as well as his devotion to the king, and had been assured that Cromwell had out of "his dewty toward your

¹⁴ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 228-229, 245-246.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-134.

grace and his goodness toward me, he hath, I understand, declared unto your grace.”¹⁶ It is extremely unlikely that Thomas More, a staunch Catholic, would ever ask an allegedly well-known heretic for help. Cromwell’s beliefs may have changed over time, or he may have been extremely careful to keep his beliefs secret, and since Everett does not examine Cromwell’s career or religious beliefs past 1534, it is entirely possible that his opinions changed dramatically between 1534 and his death in 1540, or that in those years he felt safer to express them. Everett does suggest that Cromwell was somewhat anticlerical, and notes that Cromwell greatly promoted the cause of the Bible in English.¹⁷

Diarmaid MacCulloch goes further, following Cromwell’s beliefs up until his execution. He argues that Cromwell was a passionate evangelical who worked to promote evangelical reform in England, often alongside Thomas Cranmer. It was only after Henry officially broke with the Church of Rome that Cromwell began to show more of his reformist hand. He began reaching out to reformers in Europe, and appointed friends and evangelicals to numerous positions back in England, even into the Privy Council. In his position as Vice-Gerent in Spirituals, he acted in place of the Supreme Head of the Church of England, King Henry, and it was through this position that he was able to spearhead evangelical reform in England, largely through the men he appointed to numerous positions and offices. He played a major role in the establishment of the Ten Articles of belief of the Church of England and the Bishops’ Book, which picked up where the Ten Articles left off and established the beliefs and doctrine of the Church of England. Working with Cranmer, he secured Henry’s authorization to produce an English Bible, first the “Matthew Bible” in 1537 and the “Great Bible” in 1538. The Great Bible was the first fully official English Bible and became the basis for all official English Bibles until

¹⁶ *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History; Vol. II*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: Harding, Triphook, and Lepad, 1825), 49, <https://archive.org/details/originallettersi02elliuoft/page/48>.

¹⁷ Everett, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, 134-143.

1611. Cromwell also led the campaigns to dissolve friaries and unsuitable monasteries, as well as end pilgrimages to shrines and relics. He had the king's support, as much of the spoils of dissolved friaries and monasteries went to the Crown. All friaries were closed by 1539, and at the same time religious shrines were being destroyed, including the shrine of the famous St. Thomas Becket.¹⁸

In following the more common depiction of Cromwell as a reformer, it is believed that his ideas put him into contact with Anne Boleyn and her family as well as Thomas Cranmer, and it has been argued that he became Anne's right-hand man. In reality, while they sometimes worked in cooperation, they more often worked independently of each other. While both Anne and Cromwell acted as religious patrons, they also both served as secular patrons. It has been argued that Cromwell was more of a radical reformer than Anne, so the idea that they formed a faction intent on increasing the number of reformist clergy in the Church is unlikely.¹⁹ But both Anne and Cromwell favored the dissemination of the Bible in the vernacular, and as queen, Anne wanted Cromwell's assistance in protecting other likeminded individuals. In a letter to Cromwell, Anne requested that he restore a merchant named Richard Herman to freedom and liberty after he had been expelled from his home by Wolsey "oonly for that that he dyd bothe with his gooddys and pollicie, to his greate hurte and hynderans in this Worlde, helpe to the setting forthe of the Newe Testamente in Englisshe."²⁰ This would have been considered heresy to strict Catholics, but a brave and necessary step in the journey to religious reform by other reformists, including both Anne and Cromwell.

¹⁸ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell*, 260, 347, 361, 412-414, 416-417, 452, 464-465, 478, 492-493.

¹⁹ Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 154-158.

²⁰ *Original Letters, Vol. II*, Ellis, 46.

Despite their agreement on the availability of Scripture in the vernacular, their other ideas about religious reform caused contention. One of these areas of contention between Cromwell and Anne was what to do with unfit monasteries. Anne believed that monasteries should be reformed, and that any assets gained from dissolving a monastery should go towards education or other charitable uses. Cromwell wanted to confiscate monastic and Church lands to help solve the king's financial troubles. The collection of such revenue would provide funds to modernize the country's defenses and would increase royal and ministerial influence by multiplying the fund of royal patronage. Henry was pleased with Cromwell's plan and the Dissolution Bill was passed by Parliament. But Anne was a bold, and sometimes reckless, woman who was not afraid to make a statement. Eric Ives argues that she did just that in April 1536, while the Dissolution Bill was still awaiting royal assent, clearly indicating the battle lines she and Cromwell had drawn. This came in the form of her almoner, John Skip, who was the appointed preacher for the Passion Sunday mass. In his sermon, Skip made numerous references to Anne's support of moderate religious reform and accused the king's councilors of gross sycophancy, protested the generalized attacks on the clergy, and stated that attacks on the clergy were because greedy men "would have from the clergy their possessions."²¹ Additionally, Skip delivered a further message that seems to have been a direct attack on Cromwell. He stated that the king needed to be "well wary what he does after the counsel of his counsellors for some time for the malice that they bear toward many men or toward one man as of a multitude they would have the whole multitude destroyed."²² Ives claims that Skip would not have dared to make such a fiery sermon without Anne's specific approval; he was clearly delivering a message from Anne.

²¹ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 307.

²² *Ibid.*, 308.

Further tension between Anne and Cromwell came in the form of foreign policy. Cromwell worked toward an Imperial alliance, and after Catherine of Aragon's death in 1536, Henry was willing to discuss an alliance with the Emperor. In order to make an alliance with England, Charles wanted to have Catherine's daughter Mary reinstated into the line of succession as the heir presumptive, even though by Parliamentary statute, Anne's daughter Elizabeth blocked Mary and Mary had been declared illegitimate in 1533. Anne and her supporters could tell where things were headed, and began showing their acceptance and support of an Anglo-Imperial alliance. However, Henry was unwilling to budge on any of his terms; he would not accept anything less than the recognition of his marriage to Anne, and was not willing to make any changes to Mary's status as a bastard or to the succession. Henry had hoped that by being difficult, he would scare Charles into thinking that he would consider a new alliance with the French, and compel Charles to agree to an alliance that accepted Henry's right to settle his religious, matrimonial, and parental affairs himself.²³

Cromwell's failed negotiations with Chapuys for the alliance with Spain and Anne's attack on him via John Skip's sermon may have concerned him enough that he saw Anne as a threat to his position. It was at this point, mid April 1536, that some historians, including Eric Ives and Diarmaid MacCulloch believe that Cromwell, not Henry, decided that Anne needed to be removed. MacCulloch cites Alexander Alesius as a source, using his account of Anne Bolyen's downfall he had written for Elizabeth I in 1559. Although Alesius never met Anne in person, he was present in court during her final year and was even a guest of both Cranmer and Cromwell, and he states that Cromwell was behind Anne's fall from the beginning. Additionally, Chapuys reported that Cromwell spoke to him just days after Anne's execution and claimed that

²³ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 312-316.

he had “set himself to think up and plot the whole business.”²⁴ Following this evidence, Anne had become a threat to Cromwell’s policies and power through the complications she made in foreign affairs and through her public attacks on monastic secularization. In a complicated coup, Cromwell planned not only to remove the queen, but her supporters within the king’s Privy Chamber. In purging the Privy Chamber of Anne’s faction, Cromwell would remove those closest to the king who could fight for Anne, and he could not risk Anne’s resurgence. In an unlikely, and temporary, alliance Cromwell positioned himself with the conservatives at court, notably Chapuys, Sir Francis Bryan, Sir Nicholas Carew, the Marquess of Exeter, other supporters of Mary, and most notably the Seymours, who had become prominent in the first months of 1536 because of the king’s attachment to Jane Seymour.²⁵ Cromwell moved swiftly to find a way to get rid of Anne; speed was of the essence, for as many times as Anne and the king quarreled, she could always bring him back to her, and Cromwell had to make sure that she had no chance to do so.²⁶

The charge that Cromwell decided upon was adultery, for which he used Anne’s flirtatious nature against her. The men accused of being the queen’s lovers were Sir Henry Norris, Sir Francis Weston, Sir William Brereton, Mark Smeaton, and Anne’s own brother George, Viscount Rochford. All the men accused were part of Anne’s faction at court and members of the king’s Privy Chamber, and their destruction would create valuable openings for new courtiers, including friends of Cromwell, and would leave Anne without her most loyal supporters. It was a successful coup, and Cromwell readily took credit for Anne’s condemnation. He told Chapuys that, “having received full authority from the King to discover the affairs of

²⁴ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell*, 313-314, 342.

²⁵ Weir, *The Lady in the Tower*, 69-70, 85.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

‘the concubine’ he had taken a great deal of trouble in ‘fabricating and the plotting the whole business.’²⁷ Additionally, he attempted to excuse his part in securing the king’s marriage to Anne, stating that he had only assisted the king because he was so bent on marrying Anne.²⁸

Cromwell emerged from Anne’s fall as an immediate beneficiary. He received the office of Lord Privy Seal from Anne’s father, and his own son was created Lord Cromwell of Wimbledon.²⁹ He was also knighted and created Baron Cromwell of Oakham in July 1536. Cromwell continued to be Henry’s most trusted advisor until he played the leading role in arranging Henry’s fourth marriage to Anne of Cleves. Henry disliked Anne on sight and had the marriage annulled after six months. Anne agreed to the annulment and was permitted to live out her life in England as “the king’s sister.” Cromwell was created Earl of Essex and Lord Great Chamberlain of England on 17 April 1540, but in June 1540, was arrested for a variety of crimes including the accusations that he had hired large numbers of retainers (which had been deemed as offense to prevent to the creation of private armies), treason, and heresy. One part of the heresy charge was for licensing heretics to preach and teach, and for defending them against anyone who accused them of heresy.³⁰ Even more damning, he was charged with “sacramentarianism,” an attack on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a traditional belief that Henry still passionately held.³¹ Cromwell was found guilty and was executed by beheading 28 July 1540, just over four years after Anne Boleyn.

²⁷ Wilson, *In the Lion’s Court*, 390.

²⁸ Hutchinson, *Thomas Cromwell*, 89.

²⁹ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 592.

³⁰ Hutchinson, *Thomas Cromwell*, 105, 221, 238-262.

³¹ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell*, 243, 530.

CHAPTER FOUR. ANNE, THOMAS CRANMER, AND THE ADVENT OF RELIGIOUS REFORM

Anne and Religion

Religion and politics went hand in hand in the early modern period, and especially during Anne Boleyn's lifetime. Anne is often hailed as a Protestant, or even Lutheran, queen, but those titles do not fit. Anne did favor religious reform, but in specific aspects. Anne supported and even encouraged Henry to break away from the Church of Rome and take control of his own Church in England, but that could be more so because it was a necessary step to make her Henry's wife and queen. Anne was also greatly concerned about monastic houses and she worked to prohibit the display of relics or any other feigned miracles. But one of Anne's greatest passions was the importance of the Bible. If her type of reform needs a label, evangelical may fit. Anne enjoyed discussing the Bible, studying it, and reading it for herself. Anne strongly believed that Bibles should be available in the vernacular, and she even kept an English Bible on a lectern in her chambers for anyone to read.¹ Despite Anne's desire for reform on those three fronts, her theology was still largely traditional, and she enjoyed ceremonies of the medieval Church. In 1528, she distributed cramp rings to the English envoys in Rome, she celebrated Maundy Thursday during her reign, and she owned a traditional Catholic book of hours with a calendar that contained the English saints, as well as the Franco-Flemish saints.² Unlike Protestants, Anne believed that salvation was based on more than faith alone, and she predicted that she would reach salvation because she had "'done mony gud dedys'"³ (done many good deeds), placing her on the more traditional Catholic side of the religious spectrum. It is possible that Anne's views

¹ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 260, 264, 268-269.

² Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 108-109.

³ *Ibid.*, 108.

became more reformist over the last few years of her life, and had she lived longer, she may have gone even further down the path of reform.

In addition to reading the Bible, Anne read books that had been banned in England. She read William Tyndale's *The Obedience of the Christian Man*, a work that criticized the papacy and stressed the authority of monarchs, a notion deeply important to her and to Henry in their attempts to have his marriage annulled so that they could marry. She urged Henry to read it, and he agreed with many of Tyndale's points so heartily that he said "'This a book for me and all kings to read!'"⁴ However, it was considered unsuitable for commoners and remained banned. Anne also recommended that Henry read Simon Fish's *A Supplication for the Beggars*. Simon Fish was a lawyer who had fled into exile after angering Wolsey. By the time Anne introduced Henry to the book, he was more open to hearing criticisms of the Church, and enjoyed the work. Anne used Henry's enjoyment of the work to secure protection for Fish after he returned to England.⁵ While Anne may have been becoming more interested in larger-scale reform within the Church, it is again important to recognize that many of the works she read and reformers she protected argued against papal power, and it was the pope who was holding her back from becoming queen in refusing to grant Henry a divorce. In protecting reformers and presenting their opinions to Henry, she helped push him towards his eventual break with the Church in Rome, but not towards massive religious reform within the English Church, since Henry's views were also largely traditional.

As queen, Anne tried to portray a Godly image, probably largely based on the households of Claude of France and Margaret of Navarre, where she spent her childhood. She set a high moral and charitable standard among her household, as well as a religious example. Her

⁴ Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court*, 297.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 297.

attendants were required to hear divine service daily, and she presented them all with a book of devotions that contained prayers and English Psalms.⁶ Anne herself carried a little purse from which she would scatter alms to the poor daily. Whenever the court traveled to a different house, she would send her sub-almoner around the neighboring towns to draw up a list of the poor in each parish, after which she would give the towns presents of £7-10 to buy cattle.⁷ Anne's charities were widespread, a fact not well known during her lifetime. In addition to providing money to poor towns, Anne and her ladies sewed various garments to give, and she discreetly provided for widows and poor householders. Anne also aided scholars, particularly poor ones, and provided money for their education, as well as helped maintain several students at the University of Cambridge.⁸ Anne's charitable work may have been an attempt to win over the people, part of her traditional beliefs in doing good deeds, actions that she felt were the duties of a queen, passion that came from her heart, or a combination of all of these.

Conceptions of Anne Boleyn often portray her as vicious, conniving, and cruel. However, Anne did a lot to try to protect the English people, particularly reformers. Anne's protection allowed for Protestant Robert Barnes to return to England after fleeing for safety, and he was able to preach in London without fear. Anne also secured the freedom of Richard Herman, a convicted heretic who Wolsey had exiled for his calls to translate the Bible into English, a practice for which she was extremely passionate. During Anne's reign, not a single heretic was burned; something that would either be ignored, or used against Anne as proof her own alleged heresy.⁹ Anne's protection of religious reformers may have been based on an increasing passion for reform, but many reformers favored decreased papal power, and it was the pope who had

⁶ Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, 150-152.

⁷ Bruce, *Anne Boleyn*, 244.

⁸ Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 280.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 278-279.

stood in her way for the six years that she and Henry fought to have his marriage annulled, and continued to cause problems for them once she was crowned.

An important argument to be made about Anne Boleyn is how much religious influence she had. Some credit Anne with filling the empty bishoprics with her men, but it is more likely that Henry chose the new bishops, though some of his decisions were likely in part because of Anne's advice, which he valued. Anne had already shown that she was very active and involved in Henry's attempts to obtain his divorce, and it is not surprising that she would take an active interest in finding men she felt were best suited for any vacant bishoprics. For Henry, who was not interested in large scale reform, it stands to reason that the men who filled the empty sees during the 1520s and 1530s are more likely to have been loyal supporters of his decision to break with the Church of Rome than radical religious reformers, and if they were, they were likely not very outspoken in their beliefs yet.¹⁰ Anne did single out favorites for whom she acted as patron, all of whom were created bishops, including Thomas Cranmer (Canterbury), Hugh Latimer (Worcester), Nicholas Shaxton (Salisbury), Thomas Goodrich (Ely), and John Skip (Hereford). Latimer became her chaplain, and Skip replaced Shaxton as her almoner.¹¹

Hugh Latimer

Hugh Latimer was a particularly important figure in the English Reformation. Not much is known about his early years, but he was born in Leicester and was educated at Cambridge. He received deacon's orders on April 7, 1515 and was ordained a priest on July 15, 1516, possibly by the Bishop of Lincoln, William Atwater. In 1522, he was appointed one of the twelve Cambridge preachers, and within the same year, was granted the position of university cross-

¹⁰ Bernard, *Fatal Attractions*, 109.

¹¹ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 399.

keeper, a position of great honor and responsibility. Until 1524, he had been opposed to Lutheranism and the new learning that had spread from the continent. It was not until Thomas Bilney spoke to him in an emotional private confession that Latimer's views changed and he started on the path to becoming a famed reformer. At the time of his conversion, "he accepted the Holy Scriptures as the sole authority in matters of faith and doctrine" and he rejected "the authority of the vast accumulation of scholastic literature upon which the Church of the Middle Ages had come to depend."¹² Enlightened, Latimer began to preach this new doctrine, and because of his position as a university preacher, he was licensed to preach throughout the kingdom.¹³

One his earliest and most important contributions to the reformist cause was his open preaching on behalf of the Bible in English. Like many reformers, he believed that the Bible was the primal foundation of the Christian faith and should therefore be available in the vernacular so that more people could read it for themselves. Latimer preached openly and devotedly for an English Bible from the mid 1520s until such a Bible was licensed in 1537. Historian Allan Chester even credits Latimer's work on behalf of the English Bible as so great that his work ranks below only that of Thomas Cranmer and the actual translators. His preaching in favor of an English Bible brought him before Cardinal Wolsey, who was bearing down on Lutheranism around the universities. He was released-possibly because he was not passing out any New Testament translations like other reformers were, and he was also not advocating anything heretical-and he returned to Cambridge where he continued preaching.¹⁴

¹² Allan G. Chester, *Hugh Latimer: Apostle to the English* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia University Press, 1954), 20.

¹³ Chester, *Hugh Latimer*, 1-20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-38.

Latimer first became involved with the king as Henry's attempts to divorce Catherine of Aragon continued unsuccessfully into 1529 and 1530, and following Thomas Cranmer's suggestion, Henry sought the opinions of the most respected universities in Europe to determine the validity of his marriage. Latimer, still a preacher at Cambridge, was a member of the Cambridge committee whose task it was to make a decision for the entire university and present it to the king. Because the divorce had become increasingly linked to the question of papal authority, it is unsurprising that Latimer voted in favor of the king. In the end, the Cambridge committee decided in Henry's favor. Although the extent of Latimer's role in the committee is unknown, he was notable enough that he was invited to preach before the king at Windsor, and he did so on 13 March 1530. Henry and Anne were both present on that day, and both greatly enjoyed his preaching.¹⁵

As a reward for his services as part of the Cambridge committee, Latimer was appointed as rector of West Kingston in early 1531. He found himself in service to the king again during the Elizabeth Barton affair. His role was not large, but he assisted in some of the early examinations into her and her visions. It may have been through the intervention of Thomas Cranmer, who was Latimer's friend and the Archbishop of Canterbury, that he was granted royal permission to preach at court every Wednesday in Lent in 1534. It was not long after that that he was appointed one of the king's chaplains, a position of great influence. As such, he enjoyed a position of influence, and upon his recommendations, Cranmer issued preaching licenses to a number of reformists. In 1535, he was created Bishop of Worcester; another reformer and the king's almoner, Nicholas Shaxton, was created Bishop of Salisbury in the same year. Latimer was unable to raise the money to pay the crown the advancement of the bishopric's first year's

¹⁵ Chester, *Hugh Latimer*, 49-55.

income until Queen Anne intervened and paid for him and for Shaxton as well. It is possible that Anne had suggested to Henry that Latimer and Shaxton be appointed to their sees, but if not, it is clear that she had interest in their affairs and confidence in their abilities.¹⁶

As bishop, Latimer selected men of religious zeal as chaplains and assigned them to preach within his diocese. His position also put him in the thick of political affairs: he was a member of the government party, he participated in theological deliberations that would prove to be significant in the Church of England's history, and he served as one of foremost pulpit propagandists. At court, he was a favorite of Anne's, and he, along with Bishop Shaxton, would often dine with the king and queen and debate doctrine. When Anne was executed in 1536, Latimer lost his most influential friend at court. He did not play a role in her downfall and he came out of it almost completely unmarked; he would still enjoy royal favor but never to the same degree as he had with Anne as his patron.¹⁷ Despite her great impact on his career, his praise of Anne's "modesty, prudence, and gravity, and her zeal to promote 'the Gospel,'" is the only recorded opinion by Latimer about his fallen queen.¹⁸

Latimer's lack of entanglement with Anne's fall allowed for him to continue in service to the king and to the English Reformation. He, along with Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Shaxton, and Edward Fox assisted Henry in creating the Ten Articles, which became the first collection of doctrine for the English Church. These consisted of five articles devoted to faith and five to ceremonies. He also helped create the doctrine that replaced the Ten Articles, the Bishops' Book, which elaborated on the Ten Articles, but also contained some tenets of the old religion, including articles on the sacraments of confirmation, Holy Orders, and matrimony. It also

¹⁶ Chester, *Hugh Latimer*, 65, 96-104.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 107, 111-113.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

continued to deny the authority of the bishop of Rome and affirmed the supremacy of the king in the article on Holy Orders. Latimer went on to have a tumultuous career during which he resigned his bishopric and was imprisoned, released, and forbidden to preach in London, and was then imprisoned again in 1546 until after Henry's death in 1547. He received a pardon from Edward VI and resumed preaching, and his religious views became more radical; in particular, he began to deny transubstantiation. He acted as a sort of spokesperson for the reformist Edwardian government until Edward's death in 1553. When Mary, Henry and Catherine of Aragon's daughter, ascended the throne, Latimer was tried and convicted of heresy, and was burned at the stake on 16 October 1556.¹⁹

Thomas Cranmer

One of the single most influential figures to come to prominence during Anne Boleyn's rise was Thomas Cranmer. Born in 1489 to a modest family in Aslockton in Nottinghamshire, he went on to attend Cambridge around the same time as Hugh Latimer and Thomas Goodrich, future bishops of Worcester and Ely. He was ordained in 1520 and was named by the University as one of the preachers entitled by papal license to preach throughout the British Isles. Although he is famous for being a religious reformer and major player in the English Reformation, his views were not always so unconventional. Even into the 1520s, there is no proof of Cranmer having any anti-papal sentiment. He also disliked Martin Luther's insolence to the pope, but even more so, he was angered by Luther's apparent dislike of the Councils of the Church. Cranmer was not quite as conservative and traditional as Bishop John Fisher, but during the 1520s, he was

¹⁹ Chester, *Hugh Latimer*, 117-120, 149-161, 214-216.

nowhere close to being a reformer.²⁰ Historian Diarmaid MacCulloch states that early in his career, Cranmer was a conformist Catholic but also a biblical humanist, that he was a “secular priest and academic of conventionally traditional, if humanist, cast of mind. He loved his Bible, and he was ready to single out imprecision in his colleagues’ academic arguments even when it was the great Fisher who was at fault; predictably, his admiration was reserved for Erasmus and not for Luther.”²¹ Although his opinions would change as the years progressed, it is important to see that he, like Hugh Latimer and Anne Boleyn, was not always a shining symbol of religious reform.

Although Cranmer is also famous for the role he played in Henry VIII’s Great Matter, he had met the king before becoming involved in the royal divorce. He first met the king in June 1527 after serving a minor diplomatic role as part of a larger embassy to Spain. He served as Dr. Edward Lee’s representative and was granted an interview with the king upon his return home, but it was not until he became involved with the king’s divorce in 1529 that he began to take on more significant roles. During the king’s summer progress, Cranmer happened to be lodging at the same place as the king’s secretary, Dr. Stephen Gardiner, and Dr. Edward Foxe, former secretary to Cardinal Wolsey. Gardiner and Foxe had been on two unsuccessful missions to Rome to attempt to obtain the king’s annulment and were journeying back to London. The three men knew each other from Cambridge and began to discuss the troubles they were having in securing the king’s annulment. It was at that time that Cranmer made the famous suggestion that Henry take the campaign away from the legal courts in Rome to a canvassing of respected university theologians throughout Europe to let doctors of divinity decide on the matter. Gardiner and Foxe presented the idea to Henry, where it was met with his approval. Cranmer’s idea put

²⁰ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 7, 15, 23-31.

²¹ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 33.

him in favor with the king and with the Boleyn family, such that he was given lodging in Thomas Boleyn's London home, Durham Place, in late 1529.²²

After putting forth the initial idea, Cranmer was assigned the task of producing arguments for the annulment. Once his work was complete, he, Thomas Boleyn, and Edward Lee traveled to Bologna to set forth their argument to Charles V and Pope Clement VII. Boleyn's instructions from the king contained a glowing reference to the encouragement he had received from "the saying of a wise and virtuous man'...Here was a commentator who clearly ranked canon law below the law of God, a harmonious echo of the King's position over the previous three years."²³ Additionally, Cranmer was to collect the opinions of various universities in regards to the annulment, and to work with his team to prepare publication to win over hearts and minds throughout England and Europe. One of these works was the *Collectanea Satis Copiosa* ("The sufficiently abundant Collections"), written in 1531, designed to present historical proof that it was the king, not the pope, who had supreme jurisdiction over all things within his realm.²⁴ For a king contemplating the option of breaking with the Church in Rome, such a work provided encouragement.

As he traveled through Europe for the king, Cranmer's work and contact with religious reformers likely influenced his personal religious views. While researching the nature of authority in the Church, he read numerous texts about Church councils and the conciliar independence of metropolitan churches. There were various examples of statements that could be selected to show that not the pope, but metropolitan bishops and monarchs were entrusted with the power to rule the Church. Cranmer also met European reformers including Simon Grynaeus,

²² MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 45-47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 51, 54-55.

a former monk, and Andreas Osiander, a preacher and religious revisionist in Nuremberg. Their influence may have played a role in Cranmer's drifting allegiance from Rome. An additional push certainly must have come from Cranmer's marriage to Margarete, Osiander's niece. As a priest he had sworn a vow of celibacy, but if he had been contemplating the supremacy of kings within their realms, he may have no longer felt compelled to keep his oath as he was currently in a province where clerical marriage was acceptable.²⁵

Cranmer's journey through Europe ended abruptly in October 1532. Archbishop Warham of Canterbury had died, and the king had settled the archbishopric on Cranmer and sent an order for his return to England. Henry's decision made sense to him and the Boleyns, but few others; Cranmer himself was shocked but returned to England as ordered. He did not rush back, however. As he had recently married, he likely feared returning home to the highest office within the English Church. Additionally, with his changing views regarding papal authority, he may have been concerned about the idea of receiving papal institution and induction to enter into his new position.²⁶ But after a slight delay, he returned to England.

Cranmer's elevation to the Archbishopric of Canterbury came in part from his work that pleased the king, and from his patrons, the Boleyns. Henry himself told Cranmer "he ought to thank Anne Boleyn for this welcome promotion."²⁷ If that is correct, Anne clearly assisted in the attempts to obtain the annulment; she did not leave it up to everyone else, but had her own ideas and opinions about who would best serve the cause, and Cranmer was one of them. When Cranmer arrived in England, Anne was pregnant and secretly married to the king. In a rush to have Cranmer consecrated, Henry paid the fees necessary to receive the papal bulls required for

²⁵ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 59-60, 70-72.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 75-77.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

the promotion to the archbishopric. At his consecration in St. Stephen's College in the Palace of Westminster, he swore loyalty to the papacy, but immediately followed it with "a solemn protestation declaring that his oath would not override the law of God and his loyalty to the King, or act to the hindrance of 'reformation of the Christian religion, the government of the English Church, or the prerogative of the Crown or the well-being of the same commonwealth.'" He then swore "'to prosecute and reform matters wheresoever they seem to me to be for the reform of the English Church.'"²⁸ Using his new position, Cranmer declared Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon invalid, and Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn as valid and legal. He then played the principal role at Anne's coronation ceremony. He prayed over her, anointed and crowned her, and then delivered to her the scepter and ivory rod. He was even the principal male guest at the following feast, and sat at the queen's right hand.²⁹

Once Cranmer had given his king what he had desired for six years, he set about working on reforming the English Church. It was not a task he could do alone; many of his actions still required both Henry's approval and Parliament to pass, and throughout the remaining years of Henry's reign, he would have to work around the king's changing moods about the extent of reform to make and when to pull back to more traditional religious policies. Cranmer's patronage was something that he could give without much royal involvement, and he worked to put evangelical men in place. Two of these men were Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Shaxton. In 1534, he arranged for Latimer's preaching at court before the king and queen and presented Shaxton to the monarchs; Shaxton became Anne's almoner soon after, and Latimer became one of Henry's chaplains.

²⁸ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 88.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

Cranmer proved to be a friend to the Boleyns for the rest of his life, and even though he could not save Anne in 1536, he stayed by Thomas Boleyn's side and served as his executor in Boleyn's last years.³⁰ He was not involved in the plot to remove Anne, and when he heard about her arrest and the charges against her, he was shocked. However, he feared that attempting to seek an audience with the king on Anne's behalf could result in the end of religious reform, and so he wrote a letter to Henry that expressed his astonishment at the queen's crimes, his hope that she would be proven innocent, and swore his loyalty to Henry as a way to soothe the king's wounded ego. Cranmer knew Anne well, having known her since 1529 and having served as the Boleyn's household chaplain, even considered himself "'of all creatures living' the 'most bounden'" to her.³¹ He found the charges very hard to believe, but even so, he wrote his letter on the premise that the charges were justified. Overall, his affection and admiration for Anne would mean very little; his desire to loyally serve the king, his sense of self-preservation, and his zeal for reform kept him from making any more moves to help her. If he wanted to save himself, he had to abandon his queen.³² He was also tasked with the unfortunate duty of hearing her last confession and declaring her marriage to the king invalid, thereby bastardizing her daughter Elizabeth.

Cranmer felt genuine sadness at the loss of his queen; a client of his spoke to him the morning of Anne's execution about which he said "'she who has been the Queen of England on earth will today become a Queen in heaven'" before breaking into tears. It seems clear that he did not believe that Anne was guilty of the crimes of which she was accused; he may not have been so sad if she had revealed her guilt in her last confession to him. But with Anne's death, he

³⁰ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 82.

³¹ Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 255.

³² Weir, *The Lady in the Tower*, 152-155.

also feared for himself and for the evangelical reformation in England.³³ But Cranmer continued to ride high in Henry's favor and the reformation continued, although with some hiccups, throughout Henry's reign.

Cranmer played an active part in the reformation through the remainder of Henry's reign. He assisted Henry in the creation of the Ten Articles, the first set of doctrine for the reformed English Church, was involved in the creation of the Bishops' Book, pushed for the authorization of the Bible in English. He also worked for vernacular church services, the first of which was officially authorized and published in England on 27 May 1544. Cranmer helped craft it, and it would eventually become the litany of the Book of Common Prayer. Despite his disagreements with Henry over matters of doctrine, particularly when Henry backtracked to a more conservative stance, Cranmer remained in the king's favor. In 1537, he stood as one godparent to the new prince, Edward, Henry's son with Jane Seymour. He survived the ups and downs of numerous figures at court, including Thomas Cromwell, and he survived all attempts by conservative groups at court to oust him from his position. His relationship with the king was one based on Henry's total trust in him, and it was a trust that remained for the rest of the king's life. Appropriately, Cranmer was with Henry at his deathbed, holding the dying king's hand and making sure that Henry acknowledged his trust in the Lord before dying.³⁴

After Henry's death, Cranmer continued to help spearhead the English Reformation under Edward VI. It was during Edward's reign that the work that Cranmer had begun in 1538-1539 was published in one uniform liturgy for the English Church: the Book of Common Prayer, first published in 1549 before being edited and republished in 1552. It was also during Edward's reign that clerical marriage was legalized in England and Cranmer could present his wife, and

³³ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 159.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 161-166, 185, 196-197, 207, 310-321, 328, 361.

children, without fear. MacCulloch argues that there was a “continuity of purpose in a graduated series of religious changes” during Edward’s reign that were “designed to destroy one Church and build another... Thomas Cranmer was the one man who guaranteed the continuity of the changes, and he was chiefly responsible for planning them as they occurred, although more practical secular politicians decided the pace at which they should be put into effect.”³⁵ But most of these changes were not to last; when Mary became queen she brought England back into the Roman fold. Cranmer had agreed to try to keep Mary from the throne by signing the dying Edward’s device for the succession, which barred both Mary and Elizabeth (Anne’s daughter) from becoming queen as Henry had specified in his will, and placing their cousin Jane Grey on the throne instead. Once Jane and her councilors were overthrown and Mary became queen, Cranmer was arrested for treason for his role in Jane’s brief reign. He was also tried as a heretic since Mary was a staunch Catholic and supporter of the pope. He was found guilty and burned at the stake on 21 March 1556.³⁶

³⁵ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 365-366.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 396, 407-408, 539-545, 554-557, 603-604.

CONCLUSION

Anne Boleyn's relationship with King Henry VIII proved to be the catalyst of the English Reformation, and the launchpad and destruction of numerous political and religious figures, particularly Anne's family, Queen Catherine of Aragon and Princess Mary, Thomas Wolsey, Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, Thomas Cranmer, and Hugh Latimer. In a period when politics and religion were so tightly entwined, it is almost impossible to talk about one without the other. This study set out to highlight these figures, some of the most important of the Tudor dynasty, and how they were connected to Anne's rise to queen and her execution just three years later, looking at their personal struggles and contributions, but also their relationship to Anne and what direct or indirect impact she had on them. Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, this work has shown that Anne was not the great political schemer who sought to destroy the lives of prominent men and women who stood in her way of becoming queen, but that it was the king who was the true cause of their destruction. Anne's greatest power lay in improving the careers of her family and supporters because she could appoint them to positions within her household, and sing their praises to Henry and suggest that they be given rewards and appointments at court.

Anne Boleyn is an impressive figure in her own right; she was intelligent, ambitious, witty, strong-willed, and bold. Not just anyone could have risen from her position as courtier's daughter to queen of England, and it is through her position as the king's great love and queen that enabled her to make her mark on history. Her power was limited because she was not born into royalty or the highest level of nobility, but her relationship with Henry gave her the power to help raise men to positions of power with her, often at the expense of other prominent men. She was able to discuss politics and religion with Henry, who valued her opinions, and she used her

influence to secure positions of power for family members and some favorites, although ultimate decisions rested on Henry's choices and actions. Anne had the power to appoint men and women to her personal household and bring them to the king's attention, but she could only suggest appointments to political and religious offices, that power rested with Henry. She was a very influential patron to many figures throughout her rise and reign, which did not require Henry's final approval, including numerous reformists who had fled England for their own safety, and supported scholars and poor university students, as well as providing for numerous charities.

This work's purpose was to examine Anne's influence, whether direct or indirect, on the political and religious changes that occurred because of her ascension and execution. In particular, it focused on Anne's family (the Boleyns and the Howards), Henry's family (his wife and daughter), and a collection of men who were involved in both the changing politics and religion of the realm. Her father, Thomas Boleyn, and her uncle, Thomas Howard, became the king's close companions and were granted titles and positions of power. Anne's brother also received similar rewards, and Anne appointed several women from her extended family to her household and helped arrange advantageous marriages for them. Although her brother George was the only member of her family to be executed with her, Anne's disgrace and execution resulted in her family's loss of position and influence. Henry's wife, Catherine of Aragon, and their daughter, Princess Mary, were stripped of their titles and separated from Henry and each other for years. Although Anne was and is often blamed for their treatment, it was Henry who ultimately decided their fates; Anne herself made numerous attempts to form a relationship with Mary, but was rebuffed. Although Anne often spoke harshly about Catherine and Mary, historians Ives, Fraser, Starkey, and Denny all place the majority of the blame for their treatment on Henry. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, and Bishop John Fisher lost everything

because Henry was determined to marry Anne and assert his supremacy over the Church in England. As evidenced by the work of Gywn, Ives, and Bernard, Wolsey's disgrace came from his failure to obtain the king's divorce, rather than because of the workings of an anti-Wolsey faction headed by Anne Boleyn. Letters and accounts written by Henry, Anne, Wolsey, Stephen Gardiner, Norfolk, and Thomas Alward, also support this argument. More and Fisher were executed because they refused to swear the Oaths of Supremacy and Succession, and for their involvement with the treasonous Nun of Kent, not because Anne demanded their executions. Although there is evidence that Fisher considered Anne to be his enemy, that is not the case with More, who did not place blame on Anne for his sorry end, nor did his son-on-law and biographer, William Roper. Thomas Cromwell rose from a modest background to become the second of Henry's two greatest ministers, largely based on his skills in financial matters. His work for Wolsey was the key to his success in the king's service, not for being a revolutionary genius and mastermind of the king's divorce. His relationship with Anne, while not as close as often suggested, did turn sour and he made the case against Anne that led to her execution, only to follow her to the block four years later. Bishop Hugh Latimer and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer helped propel the English Reformation, a position they achieved through their relationships with Anne, who introduced them to the king and served as their patron. They survived Anne's fall but were burned at the stake for their actions once Henry's daughter by Catherine of Aragon came to the throne.

This work has shown that Anne did have direct involvement in the careers of several of these men, particularly those who she considered friends and supporters, including Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer, and various members of her family. Her part in the destruction of Thomas Wolsey, Thomas More, and Bishop Fisher, and in the treatment of Catherine of Aragon

and Princess Mary, is much less her direct involvement and political scheming than Henry's decision to punish those who challenged his authority. But these years of tumultuous change were so impactful that even today, the names, stories, and legacies of all of these figures live on, all because of Anne Boleyn.

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