

Henry VIII, the League of Schmalkalden, and the English Reformation (Royal Historical Society Studies in History New Series)

Rory McEntegart

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England's first Protestant foreign policy venture took place under Henry VIII, who in the wake of the break with Rome pursued diplomatic contacts with the League of Schmalkalden, the German Protestant alliance. This venture was supported by evangelically-inclined counselors such as Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer, while religiously conservative figures such as Cuthbert Tunstall, John Stokesley and Stephen Gardiner sought to limit such contacts. The king's own involvement reflected these opposed reactions: he was interested in the Germans as alliance partners and as a consultative source in establishing the theology of his own Church, but at the same time he was reluctant to accept all the religious innovations proposed by the Germans and their English advocates. This study breaks new ground in presenting religious ideology, rather than secular diplomacy, as the motivation behind Anglo-Schmalkaldic negotiations. Relations between England and the League exerted a considerable influence on the development of the king's theology in the second half of the reign, and hence affected the redirection of religious policy in 1538, the passing of the Act of Six Articles, the marriage of Henry to Anne of Cleves and the fall of Thomas Cromwell. The examination of the development of Henry's religious thinking is set in the wider context of the foreign policy imperatives of the German Protestants, the ministerial priorities of Thomas Cromwell and factional politics at the court of Henry VIII.



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