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Politics, Corporation and Commonwealth: The Early Reformation in Canterbury, c.1500- 1565

Palmer, James Henry Stuart (2016) *Politics, Corporation and Commonwealth: The Early Reformation in Canterbury, c.1500- 1565*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent,. (KAR id:60522)

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the process of religious change within Canterbury and the role played by civic governors in this change. At the start of the sixteenth century Canterbury stood as a city at the heart of England's late medieval religious culture, and popular religion in the city, for the most part, reflected this. Yet by the start of Queen Elizabeth's reign many of these associations had fallen by the wayside and the city had become home to evangelical preachers, printing presses, and a predominantly Protestant community.

While the effective implementation of government policy played a large part in these apparently efficient Reformations, the local context remains vital to properly understanding how Canterbury became Protestant. Corporate government was at the heart of this convoluted process, and the continued efficacy of civic government helped shield the city from the tumults witnessed elsewhere in Kent. During the turbulence of the later fifteenth century, the magisterial classes secured their place at the head of city society and carved out a role as economic and moral arbiters of their communities, allowing them to take a leading role in the process of Reformation. Yet this was not readily seized. Spells of disorder within the city parishes during the 1540s warned against the destabilising influence of confessional dispute and fostered an ongoing Erastian approach to matters of doctrine within the confines of the guildhall, where the maintenance of the commonwealth trumped all other concerns.

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