

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN PROTESTANTISM

In 1517, Luther challenged his fellow Catholic academics & clerics to a debate on the legitimacy of the Pope's authorization of selling indulgences. Pope Leo X (1513-1521) eventually issued an official order in the summer of 1520 that all the publications of Luther and his supporters should be burned and that he and they had a limited time in which to recant their challenge of Papal authority or they would face excommunication. Luther responded by constantly referring to the Pope as "Antichrist." In December of 1520 he led his growing number of followers in the burning of Papal publications, including ancient historical writings such as the church canons.

"Since they have burned my books, I burn theirs. The canon law was included because it makes the pope a god on earth. So far I have merely fooled with this business of the pope. All my articles condemned by Antichrist are Christian. Seldom has the pope overcome anyone with Scripture and with reason."

Unsurprisingly, Luther was excommunicated in January of 1521. Because of the Church-State connection between Rome and European kingdoms, "Lutherans" became the enemies not simply of the Pope, but also of those kingdoms loyal to papal authority. However, some German rulers took up Luther's cause. In 1530 they drafted the Augsburg Confession, which was effectively the creed of the Lutheran Church. Here are some of the key provisions:

- Lutheranism upheld the concept of the Trinity
- It also upheld the Roman Catholic concept of original sin and its transmission to infants, it therefore practiced infant "baptism" and condemned the "Anabaptists"
- It taught that men had limited free will; that God was sovereign in matters of salvation and that "saving faith" being given by Him as a gift to those who were to be saved
- It rejected transubstantiation, but upheld the idea that Jesus' body & blood were "truly present" in the Eucharist and required that both elements be offered to worshippers
- It retained private absolution in confession via priests, but did not require detailed enumeration of sins
- It allowed priests to be married
- While it retained some Latin in the Mass, it carried out services in the local language and promoted widespread literacy for the reading of the Bible in the local language
- It distinguished between ecclesiastical & civil authority of priests

Similar things were happening in Switzerland, due to the teachings of Ulrich Zwingli, who was greatly influenced by Martin Luther's work. He kicked off his protest of Papal authority in the Spring of 1522, by joining in the eating of sausages during the Lenten Fast, when no meat was to be eaten by canon law. Because of his "reformation" and the Roman Catholic governmental response to it, armed conflict eventually took place between the Protestants and Catholics in Switzerland & Austria in 1529 and 1531.

In 1534, Henry VIII of England was officially declared sovereign head of the English Church by the English Parliament, at his request. This was done so that he might gain an annulment recently denied to him by the Pope.

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

In 1535, Henry dissolved & seized for England the assets of Rome's smaller monasteries.

“FORASMUCH as manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living is daily used and committed among the little and small abbeys, priories, and other religious houses of monks, canons, and nuns, where the congregation of such religious persons is under the number of twelve persons, whereby the governors of such religious houses, and their convent, spoil, destroy, consume, and utterly waste, as well their churches, monasteries, priories, principal houses, farms, granges, lands, tenements, and hereditaments, as the ornaments of their churches, and their goods and chattels, to the high displeasure of Almighty God, slander of good religion, and to the great infamy of the king's highness and the realm, if redress should not be had thereof. And albeit that many continual visitations hath been heretofore had, by the space of two hundred years and more, for an honest and charitable reformation of such unthrifty, carnal, and abominable living, yet nevertheless little or none amendment is hitherto had, but their vicious living shamelessly increases and augments, and by a cursed custom so rooted and infected, that a great multitude of the religious persons in such small houses do rather choose to rove abroad in apostasy, than to conform themselves to the observation of good religion; so that without such small houses be utterly suppressed, and the religious persons therein committed to great and honourable monasteries of religion in this realm, where they may be compelled to live religiously, for reformation of their lives, there can else be no redress nor reformation in that behalf.”

Pope Paul III (1534-1549) officially excommunicated Henry in 1538, after Thomas Cromwell “purged” Catholic “idolatry” from the land on behalf of the king.

During the next few years, all Catholic institutions within England were closed and their assets absorbed by the kingdom. Thus, the Church-State connection was being carried over into Protestantism. This will have a bearing upon our understanding of what the Founders later intended via the First Amendment.