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The Fall of Sir Thomas Wolsey: The Contingent Circumstances and Events That Led to His Demise

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THE FALL OF SIR THOMAS WOLSEY: THE CONTINGENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND
EVENTS THAT LED TO HIS DEMISE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in History
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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the contingent events that led to the downfall of Lord High Chancellor Thomas Wolsey in England using Hall's Chronicles and the letters and papers under Henry VIII between the years of 1527 and 1529. While the popular belief is that it was from Wolsey's inability to get the annulment Henry VIII wanted from his first wife, there are other arguments. While I do follow the popular belief, in my research I found that the common belief of the inability to get the annulment is true, but not as black and white as it has been made out to be. There were many events and circumstances that hindered Wolsey and other delegates that were involved ranging from physiologically to politically. In addition, the downfall of Wolsey was not as gradual as has been assumed.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my parents, who have always supported me through my studies and hobbies no matter what they are. I would also like to dedicate this to Jacqueline Rubio, who, like my family, always saw more potential in me than I ever saw in myself and will always be my inspiration for teaching; I only hope I can be half as good as a teacher as she was.

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INTRODUCTION

Born on June 28, 1491 to the son of Henry VII, the first Tudor Dynasty king, Henry VIII is one of the most infamous English Monarchs in history. His father, Henry VII, had made the English crown very wealthy, although by no means in a way that pleased the people nor even completely legally.¹ Henry VIII was much more lavish in his spending compared to his father after inheriting the throne; loving the grandeur. Henry was also quite rash with some of his decision-making. Well-known for his splitting from the Catholic Church in Rome and his struggle to have a male heir to the throne, his reign changed the course of English History. This battle to have a male heir eventually led to a seven-year struggle to get an annulment from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. The man put in charge of this was Thomas Wolsey, who ultimately struggled for three years to get the annulment granted from the pope, with little to no success. The inability to get the annulment granted is what ultimately led to his rapid fall from power.

Henry VIII was not set to be the heir of the throne; his brother, Arthur, was. As the younger son, Henry was supposed to live a pious life and studied religion extensively. When Arthur died unexpectedly in 1502, Henry became the heir to the throne. The solution, after Henry VII briefly considered marrying Catherine herself, was that Henry VIII was to marry Catherine. With Henry now becoming the next king of England, he needed a wife to produce a male heir to the throne. But according to Leviticus, that would be against the Bible. In Leviticus 18:16 it reads, “Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brothers’ wife: it is thy brother’s

¹ Rebecca Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 250-252

nakedness.” There is another verse in Leviticus 20:21 that reads, “If a man shall take his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing...they shall be childless.” These two verses in Leviticus were a hinderance to them getting married. Catherine and her duenna swore that the marriage she previously had with Arthur Tudor was never consummated, therefore meaning the marriage was invalid and she could marry Henry VIII.² Since it was not consummated, Arthur had never seen her naked, they could get married, and Pope Leo X granted a dispensation for the marriage.

One thing Henry wanted more than anything, was a male heir to the throne of England. Despite seemingly loving Catherine (which is uncommon in a time where marriages were more of political alliances), Catherine was unsuccessful in birthing a male heir. Catherine did give birth to Henry, Duke of Cornwall, on January 1, 1511, but he died very shortly after. After this, Catherine was never able to bear a male child again. With Catherine getting older, Henry was growing concerned over her ability to bear a male child. Looking back, it is more likely that Henry himself was the cause of the reproductive issues.³ During a time before modern science and male superiority was at its peak, this would have been dismissed quickly. Henry also started to believe the inability to produce a male heir was punishment from God for marrying Catherine. Remember, Catherine had been married to his brother and according to Leviticus, to

² J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), 8

³ Catrina Banks Whitley and Kyra Kramer, “A New Explanation For The Reproductive Woes and Midlife Decline of Henry VIII,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53 No. 4, (December 2010), 828, accessed September 10, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40930359?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=henry+VIII+infertility&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dhenry%2BVIII%2Binfertility&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-5187_SYC-5188%2F5187&refreqid=fastly-default%3A9229e987edb87fcddfb94a9a0eea22e&seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents

marry a brother's widows is wrong and furthermore would result in no children. This all culminated into Henry demanding for an annulment from Catherine.

Henry VIII, although being well-versed in religion, was not as familiar with political affairs and "relied on his father's ministers to run the government."⁴ That is, until he found Thomas Wolsey. Thomas Wolsey was supposedly the son of a butcher and was sent away for schooling. Wolsey had studied theology extensively and loved international affairs. He would become a priest as well as a dean of divinity. After catching the eye of Henry VIII due to his intelligence and influential way of speaking, he was made almoner. Wolsey was capable of giving the King good direction and what to do with foreign affairs. In the Battle of Tournai, or the "Battle of the Spurs," Henry scared off the French, and with this victory Wolsey became Bishop of Tournai and proved himself to Henry. The importance of this battle was that it was the first time Henry proved himself worthy of being king by winning a battle. And for Wolsey, this was important to him because he was the one that assembled the army for Henry, therefore proving himself as a capable advisor. After this, Wolsey and Henry excelled together. Wolsey was able to help Henry in a multitude of ways that made him a trustworthy companion for him. By doing so, Wolsey was also rewarded lavishly. Eventually being titled Bishop of Lincoln, Archbishop of York, *legatus a latere*, and most importantly, Lord High Chancellor of England, and Cardinal: Wolsey was the quintessence of pluralism. Wolsey made it possible for Henry to be the king that he was. With great power comes great responsibility, which can mean life or death situations. For Wolsey, things seemed to be great at first, but not forever.

⁴ Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 258

In the early sixteenth century when Wolsey was at his zenith and Henry had gained his spurs, Italy was in a state of constant warfare. The Italian Wars seemed to have been one of the hottest topics in England, France, and the Holy Roman Empire; most of Europe for that matter. For example, on August 17, 1527, Cardinal Salviati wrote, "The cardinal of York...is very active in endeavoring to procure the release of the Pope by means of the English ambassadors in Spain; this being the first point which the Cardinal demands from the Emperor in the negotiations for the universal peace."⁵ In Henry's letters and papers at this time, letters on the Italian Wars outnumbered those on the annulment, or "Secret Matter" as it was called at the time, three to one." Charles V, King of Spain and elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire but not yet crowned, had had interest in Genoa and Milan for a variety of reasons. These two cities were held by the French after the Swiss had kicked them out. Ultimately, Francis I of France had a vendetta against Charles because Francis was also a contestant for the Imperial title.⁶ In 1523, Francis lost Milan and when trying to gain it back, was captured and imprisoned in Spain for a year.⁷ The Ottomans also were also occupying lands like Syria, Egypt, Rhodes, Belgrade, Buda, Vienna, etc. These forces were inching closer and closer to the Holy Roman Empire and shows Charles their capabilities.

Catherine was the aunt of Charles V, King of Spain. This made the annulment an international affair. Charles was going to support his aunt's wishes over Henry's. Have this

⁵ "Henry VIII: August 1527, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1514-1524. *British History Online*, accessed September 21, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1514-1524>.

⁶ J. R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1985), 15-16

⁷ Hale, *War and Society*, 16

happened a few years before his successes in Italy and France, it is possible Charles would not have cared as much, or would have been far too distracted to concern himself with this matter. Charles in many letters mentions his disgust of the fact that Henry wants an annulment and whole-heartedly tries to convince him out of it. More specifically, Charles tried to convince the pope against granting the annulment and frequently threatens the pope. So, the pope was now getting pressure from the Italian wars, Charles V's threats, and Wolsey's/Henry's push for the annulment. This caused an enormous amount of pressure on the pope, and ultimately Wolsey. When Henry and Wolsey were pushing for the annulment, there was a fervor of debates in the church and countless delegates being sent to the pope and England. What the pope wanted was time and patience, neither of which are things Henry nor Wolsey, especially, had.

To add more pressure on Europe as a whole, the Protestant Reformation was happening. Martin Luther had nailed his 95 Theses against the Catholic Church in 1517 and unknowingly began the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Obviously, Henry VIII being a "devout" Catholic, fought with him with the pope. This is quite ironic, as Henry will later begin the Protestant Reformation in England when he breaks ties with the Rome. Needless to say, Europe was in a chaos with seemingly non-stop wars and battles of succession. The Pope was usually involved in some way shape or form, and in terms of the Protestants, the pope wanted to get rid of them and the heretic Martin Luther. This caused issues for Wolsey and Henry by adding additional pressure to the pope who was already dealing with an immense amount of stress.

As if this wasn't enough tension in the European atmosphere, there was also the Sweating Sickness. Around June of 1528, the Sweating Sickness was rampant, primarily in England.⁸ This was the fourth wave of the Sweating Sickness to hit England since 1485.⁹ Taking from its name, the sickness caused "profuse sweating during a period of 24 hours with a quick progression to either death or complete recovery."¹⁰ We know Wolsey himself got it, Anne Boleyn got it, and Henry's household got it. Although not specified in the letters if it was the Sweating Sickness or not (my assumption being not), the Pope also was very ill for a period of time in 1528. On January 11th, 1528, Sir Gregory Casale wrote,

On the 8th I wrote to you that the Pope was unwell. Since then his illness has increased so greatly that fears arose of his death; which God forbid, in these turbulent times. Last night he took some medicine, which has produced little effect. This evening we have received some hope of his recovery, as the fever has not returned at its usual term; but he is not yet out of danger.¹¹

We continue to see mentions of the pope's ill-health until March of that year, although he did not die until 1534. One could make the argument that his sickness was increased due to the immense pressures that were upon his shoulders between Charles and Henry. One could make this same argument about Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey died in November of 1530 of unknown

⁸ "Henry VIII: June 1528, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1898-1911. *British History Online*, accessed September 15, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1898-1911>.

⁹ Frederick F. Holmes, "Anne Boleyn, the sweating sickness, and the hantavirus: a review of an old disease with a modern interpretation," *Journal of Medical Biography*, Vol. 6 Issue 1, 1998, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/096777209800600109?journalCode=jmba&>

¹⁰ Holmes, "The Sweating Sickness,"

¹¹ "Henry VIII: January 1529, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2269-2283. *British History Online*, accessed September 15, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2269-2283>.

causes in his sleep, but had suffered immense embarrassment after being stripped of his titles and lands and losing the friendship and trust over the king, over something that ultimately was not his fault. This failure and the three years of pressure Wolsey was experiencing ultimately could have had an effect on his health. On October 21st of 1528, Du Bellay wrote to Montmorency, "Such was part of our conversation, during which his countenance betrayed the utmost possible anxiety, tears sometimes coming into his eyes."¹² There was no doubt that Wolsey was trying his hardest for Henry, whether for his own selfish reasons or for loyalty towards him, and that it could have negatively affected his health; but I digress.

As mentioned before, Henry wanted an annulment from Catherine. The pope was the one to grant the annulment, not Wolsey. Wolsey had to do what he could with his influential prowess to gain this annulment. But was the annulment as important as defending Europe against Protestants, the wars in Italy, the pope's own health, and Charles V's threats? Henry and Wolsey would say yes; the pope, on the other hand, was struggling trying to make everyone happy and merely stay in good health.¹³ As you can see there is a lot of occurring all at once in Europe that cumulatively made the annulment not necessarily the pope's top priority. To Henry, the annulment was vital, and he would not budge. Wolsey wanted nothing more than to please the King, and also keep his titles and life, but he also did not want to

¹² "Henry VIII: October 1528, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2104-2119. British History Online, accessed September 15, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2104-2119>.

¹³ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 48

tarnish his relationship with the pope. Wolsey was stuck in the middle and got the worst result out of everyone.

Putting this all together, Wolsey desperately trying to please the King and get an annulment equated to something that is seemingly impossible. The pope was far too concerned with many other matters to really focus on Henry and the annulment. This does not mean that the Pope put the annulment totally to the side. In fact, the Pope did put great effort into attempting to help Henry with his struggle, frequently mentioning this friendship and trust of Henry VIII. Whether this trust is superficial or concrete, we may never truly know. Based off the letters it appears there is evidence of friendship, but it is also possible that this was merely a political alliance. In any case, this did not overrule his requirements as pope to make sure he made the correct decision and this is where there was conflict. The Pope seemed to have trusted Henry, but did not hastily give into his request knowing his duties as the Pope, regardless of Henry being Defender of the Faith or not. Wolsey was also in good standing with the Pope. But there is no doubt that there were other external events that were happening in Europe that overshadowed the annulment. Not only that, but Wolsey and Henry frequently made indirect, and in some cases direct threats, foreshadowing the break from Rome as early as 1527.

There are other arguments in the historiography of Wolsey's fall make arguments such as anti-Wolsey factions and/or the Boleyn family having a large part in Wolsey's fall.¹⁴ But the

¹⁴ E. W. Ives "The Fall of Wolsey," *Wolsey: Church, State, and Art*, ed. S. J. Gun & P. G. Lindley, (Cambridge: 1991), 286-315; Rapheal, Brandon, "A Time of Transition from Wolsey to Cromwell in England," (2011). HIM 1990-2015. 1177. <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015/1177>

evidence in this collection of letters against these beliefs is substantial. The fall of Wolsey was not due to the anti-Wolsey factions nor the Boleyn family; that would imply a teleological viewpoint that his demise was planned from the beginning and that does not seem to be the case. Ultimately, the fall of Sir Thomas Wolsey was not teleological, his fall was not imminent nor planned, but was in fact the result of contingent circumstances and events that ultimately led to his failure and demise.

CHAPTER TWO

GRADUAL DECLINE?

Throughout Wolsey's time as Lord High Chancellor, he proved to be an exceptional asset to Henry. Out of everything he did for Henry, nothing proved to be a more difficult task for Wolsey than getting the annulment for Henry. There have been questions regarding whether Wolsey actually tried as hard as he could to get the annulment, or if he was part of the reason why there was a delay. There is one thing I do not doubt: Wolsey was absolutely loyal to Henry and would do anything he asked, regardless of his own beliefs. While we do not really have my way of knowing if this was for his own selfish reasons or for a true loyalty to the king, we still find evidence in this collection of letters that he would do anything the king says. This is shown in a letter from Wolsey to Margaret Queen of Scotland. Margaret was yearning for a divorce herself from the Earl of Angus. One would expect Wolsey to be sympathetic towards the cause, one might not because she is a woman. In this letter Wolsey reminds her of "the divine ordinance of inseparable matrimony first instituted in Paradise' and hopes her Grace will perceive how she was seduced by flatterers to an unlawful divorce."¹⁵ This is irony at its finest: Wolsey saying how wrong it is to end a marriage yet trying to get an annulment for Henry for a marriage that is debatably illegal. But this shows that even though Wolsey may not have completely thought it was a just cause, he still did his best and underwent a lot of emotional

¹⁵ "Henry VIII: April 1528, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1825-1837. *British History Online*, accessed September 30, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1825-1837>.

angst in the process. In reality there is no way to know if Wolsey truly did have the King's best interests at heart, but based on these sources I believe his loyalty to him was unflinching. The Earl of Northumberland wrote to Wolsey that he "has always found him diligent, and ready to do the King Service."¹⁶ Wolsey's contemporaries frequently remarked his eagerness to assist the king in his interests.

The more accepted belief in the historical community is that the downfall of Wolsey was gradual, beginning in 1527 and ending in 1529, and then his death in 1530 on his way to trial of an unknown cause. The idea is that from the moment in 1527 when the downfall began, the relationship between Wolsey and Henry was progressively getting worse with Henry having less and less trust for Wolsey every day. In "The Fall of Wolsey Reconsidered," G. W. Bernard wrote, "As early as summer 1527, the king's desire for an annulment of his marriage with Catherine of Aragon had created tensions in his relations with Wolsey."¹⁷ This is true, although tension would not really begin until December. With this being said, although tensions had been raised by the urge for an annulment, this does not mean that their relationship was bad. During 1527, the annulment was referred to as "The Secret Affair" or "The King's Matter." For example, on July 29, 1527, Wolsey wrote to Henry, "Daily and hourly musing, and thinking on your Grace's great and secret affair, and how the same may come to good effect and desired end..."¹⁸ The

¹⁶ "Henry VIII: March 1528, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1807-1824. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1807-1824>.

¹⁷ G. W. Bernard, "The Fall of Wolsey Reconsidered," *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 35 No. 3, July 1996, 292

¹⁸ "Henry VIII: July 1527, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1490-1507. *British History Online*, accessed October 1, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1490-1507>.

affair was obviously not this grand affair, at least in the beginning, nor a well-known issue throughout Europe in the beginning. In fact, on August 1, 1527, Wolsey wrote to Ghinucci and Lee that,

A rumor, somehow or another, has sprung up in England that proceedings are being taken for a divorce between the King and Queen, which is entirely without foundation...But, if you hear anything started, in the event of any question being raised, and that it is foolish to suppose so grave a cause could be decided in private. I have told you all the circumstances, by which you will gather how unfounded the rumor is.¹⁹

This shows that the annulment itself was originally supposed to be a very “hush-hush” type of arrangement. At this point of time, Charles already had received knowledge of the desire for an annulment and had even discussed in a letter to Don Inigo de Mendoza about making sure it stayed secret and ending it, although supporting his aunt Catherine.²⁰ It is not until 1528 that there was more discussion of the annulment in a more open matter, as well as a more pressing matter. On January 1, 1528 there were two letters, the first reading, “he [Clement VII] would send the dispensation. He begged you would have patience for a time, and not proceed at once to trial, as he is in great perplexity,” and the second reading, “The demand in your subsequent letter, beyond the dispensation, I have granted, though not without great hazard to myself, as a token of my affection for you. Begs credence for the secretary and the Nuncio.”²¹ The former

¹⁹ "Henry VIII: August 1527, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1507-1514. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1507-1514>.

²⁰ "Henry VIII: July 1527, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1490-1507. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1490-1507>.

²¹ "Henry VIII: January 1528, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1672-1689. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1672-1689>.

was from a Knight to Henry, and the latter from Clement VII to Henry. These letters demonstrate how during 1528 the urgency for an annulment was becoming more severe and the danger in which granting the annulment does to Clement VII is also becoming more apparent.

There are more letters showing friendship and comradery than not, even as late as the summer of 1528. On July 26, 1528, Russell wrote to Wolsey,

You must comfort yourself, and be of good cheer; 'assuring your Grace that the King is well appeased and satisfied, as I well perceive when he speaks of you, and doubt you not but you shall have him as good to your Grace as ever he was in his life.' He is a prince of so many good qualities that he will remember the good service and pains you have taken for him...²²

One does have to be careful in assuming that these are true statements as it is possible Russell was attempting to give Wolsey a false sense of security, but really there is no way to know for sure either way. The following example provides a more tangible example of possible friendship. On August 30, 1528, Hennege wrote to Wolsey, "The King sends you the greatest red deer kill by him or any of his hunters this year."²³ The second was much shorter, but still important because it resembles the friendship they had even in mid-1528 despite the annulment. This does not go to say that there was not still tension between them. A little bit earlier, on December 6, 1527, Wolsey wrote to Sir Gregory Casale, "I am the more urgent as the

²² "Henry VIII: July 1528, 26-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1987-2002. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1987-2002>.

²³ "Henry VIII: August 1528, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2023-2035. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2023-2035>.

King is absolutely resolved to satisfy his conscience; and if this cannot be done, he will of two evils choose the least, and the disregard for the Papacy must grow daily, especially in these dangerous times.”²⁴ This was the only seed of doubt in Wolsey in 1527 after analyzing the Letters in this collection. Otherwise, 1527 was relatively quiet on the matter.

It would not be until January 16, 1529 that Henry directly began to blame Wolsey. On that date, Inigo de Mendoza wrote to Charles, “The King has told me that he has begun to lay the blame upon his Cardinal, who, he says, has not fulfilled his promises in the matter. And that all he has done about it hitherto has been to desire the Pope”²⁵ By October 1529, the downfall was complete. Wolsey would live imprisoned for as long as Henry wished and he had to forfeit all his lands, offices, goods, and furthermore was stripped of his Chancellorship.²⁶ Thus, this “gradual” decline was not gradual at all. The relationship between Wolsey and Henry was relatively friendly, despite Wolsey’s anxiety and pressures to get the annulment; Henry did have faith in him. By 1529, Henry was moved by urgency and refused to wait longer, laying the blame on Wolsey, who in reality, did nothing wrong and seemed to be trying his hardest. But the circumstances and events that were happening around him while attempting to get the annulment all ended up obstructing the annulment and delaying it even longer.

²⁴ "Henry VIII: December 1527, 1-9," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1629-1640. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1629-1640>.

²⁵ "Henry VIII: January 1529, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2269-2283. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2269-2283>.

²⁶ "Henry VIII: October 1529, 17-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2675-2688. *British History Online*, accessed October 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2675-2688>.

CHARLES V

As mentioned in the Introduction, Charles V was the nephew of Catherine of Aragon. Charles was going to supported the wishes of his aunt over the king's wishes, although if this would have taken place in the earlier 1520s Charles might not have cared as much because he would have been too distracted in Italy. Charles was notified of this "Secret Matter" quite early on. We know that at least by July of 1527 that he knew and was becoming active in convincing Henry out of it. It was the exact same time Henry made this decision. On July 29, 1527, Charles V wrote to Don Inigo de Mendoza saying,

It is, however, our intention not to be in fault with the Queen our aunt, but, on the contrary, to do everything in our power on her behalf...for even if it were right and allowable to say or think-which by no means is so-that the Pope could not dispense in his marriage...and we ourselves have also written to his Holiness, through another channel, respecting this ugly affair, entreating him to revoke the legatine power conferred on the cardinal of England...²⁷

From the very beginning, Charles V was totally against the movement. Another important aspect of this letter is the mention of him writing to the Pope himself. This is foreshadowing to the threats that Charles V would have against the Pope if he were to approve of the annulment.

Charles was very active in fighting against Henry and Wolsey's battle for the annulment as shown above. In mid-April of 1528 this factor is exemplified when Gregory Casale writes (possibly to Vannes),

His Holiness is not averse to pleasing the King and Wolsey, but fears the Spaniards more than he ever did...The Friar General has forbidden him, in the Emperor's name, to grant

²⁷ "Henry VIII: July 1527, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1490-1507. *British History Online*, accessed October 15, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1490-1507>.

the King's request. He fears for his life from the Imperialists...Before the Pope would grant this brief, he said, weeping, that it would be hit utter ruin; that he was at the mercy of the imperialists...The Pope desired him to write separately to Wolsey that he had willingly incurred this danger, trusting in his continual declarations of goodwill, without which he would never have dared to do it...²⁸

Immediately we are shown the fear the Pope has. The Spaniards, and their King Charles, are actively threatening the Pope specifically due to the annulment. Charles wanted to protect his aunt and it seems as if he would do whatever is necessary to make sure the annulment is not followed through with. Another important aspect of this letter was the "he had willingly incurred this danger." The Pope was aware of the danger that was presented to him for trying to help the king and was still trying to help, or so he says in this collection of letters. The Pope seems to be continually trusting both the Emperor and Henry. Even as late as March 19, 1529, Sanga wrote to Campeggio saying, "In short, the Pope wishes to satisfy the King; but in a matter which might create so much scandal it is requisite that he should proceed cautiously, and find means to justify his proceedings."²⁹ This is clear evidence that the Pope was desirous in assisting the king achieve his goals but extremely hindered by the scandal granting the annulment could bring. So, what is worse: Charles V/Spain or Henry VIII and Wolsey? There is also evidence of Henry threatening the pope. For example, on October 28, 1528 Campeggio wrote to Sanga saying, "He (Wolsey) often impresses upon me that if this [divorce] is not

²⁸ "Henry VIII: April 1528, 11-18," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1837-1848. *British History Online*, accessed October 15, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1837-1848>.

²⁹ "Henry VIII: March 1529, 16-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2368-2376. *British History Online*, accessed October 20, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2368-2376>.

granted, the authority of the See Apostolic in his kingdom will be annihilated.”³⁰ There are many letters in addition to this one between 1528 and 1529 that highlight a threat towards the Pope if the annulment not granted. The Pope is between a rock and a hard space in that no matter which way he goes there will be an issue.

Charles’ influence in this matter did have a negative effect for Wolsey. Not only was Charles effective in delaying the annulment, his threats made the Pope eventually steer more towards resolution by restoring mutual affections between the King and Queen by the end of 1528. This does not mean that tensions had been resolved. On August 17, 1528, Silvester Darius wrote, “He (the Emperor) has said nothing about the divorce, and seems to hope that it will not proceed...If the Spanish nobles hear of it, they may incite the Emperor to war. The whole of Spain is displeased about the divorce.”³¹ This is a perfect example of how although Charles V was not necessarily speaking directly about the annulment anymore, or at least at the moment, there was still a wave in Spain supporting Catherine of Aragon. The Pope would not want a war, especially after yet another Sack of Rome in 1527. Therefore, the Pope was still hindered which furthermore hinders Wolsey.

There were still a lot of letters in September of 1528 following the letter by Silvester Darius showing that there were lasting effects from the possibility of war. Most, if not all, of

³⁰ "Henry VIII: October 1528, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2104-2119. *British History Online*, accessed October 20, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2104-2119>.

³¹ "Henry VIII: August 1528, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2008-2023. *British History Online*, accessed October 20, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2008-2023>.

these letters involved Cardinal Campeggio. The goal of the letters seemed to have shifted for the Pope. At this point, the new goal was to pacify the situation by restoring mutual affections between the King and the Queen. Up to this point, the Pope has considered himself neutral in the situation which pleased Charles, and it seems as if the Pope has now shifted from trying to please the King, to keeping himself safe and happy with the Emperor. This is shown on September 16, 1528 when Sanga wrote to Campeggio discussing this goal and furthermore said, "The Emperor declares himself well satisfied with the Pope's neutrality."³² This does not work for Henry. Campeggio wrote to Salviati a month later on October 17 saying, "the King exhibited a most ardent desire for this divorce; and he seems to me to be so persuaded of the nullity of the marriage, and so firmly to believe it, that I have come to the conclusion that it will be impossible to persuade him otherwise."³³ Furthermore, Campeggio's conclusion became a reality when on October 28 of the same year Campeggio wrote to Sanga saying, "He (Wolsey) often impresses upon me that if this [divorce] is not granted, the authority of the See Apostolic in this kingdom will be annihilated; and he certainly proves himself very zealous for its preservation."³⁴ Henry was willing to take any means necessary to get the annulment.

³² "Henry VIII: September 1528, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2046-2064. *British History Online*, accessed October 21, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2046-2064>.

³³ "Henry VIII: October 1528, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2089-2103. *British History Online*, accessed October 21, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2089-2103>.

³⁴ "Henry VIII: October 1528, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2104-2119. *British History Online*, accessed October 26, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2104-2119>.

Another matter that pops up briefly after these recently mentioned letters is Wolsey's disillusionment with his own thought process. As mentioned previously, there was a letter discussing Wolsey essentially breaking down over the stress of trying to get the annulment. In the process of being pushed for an annulment for Henry for over a year, it seems Wolsey was not thinking clearly enough. Wolsey was extremely desperate knowing that his life would most likely be in danger if he was not able to obtain an annulment. Towards the end of December, Du Bellay wrote to Montmorency, "Campeggio one day told him that if the divorce took place peace would never be made, the Emperor would be so enraged against them. 'Never you mind,' said he, 'I know well what we shall do about that. He will not take the matter so much to heart as he pretends. I know how to dress up that the best way in the world, and you may trust it to me.'"³⁵ This logic is extremely flawed as there have been multiple letters from Charles himself previously mentioning his discontent with this situation. Not too long after also in the end of December, Sanga wrote to Campeggio that, "The cardinal of York is in error if he believes that the Emperor will no more take this matter to heard than anything else which might happen to him; for the Pope has not a mere conjecture, but most certain knowledge, that the case is quite otherwise, and that it would be impossible for the Pope to give him any offence which

³⁵ "Henry VIII: December 1528, 16-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2184-2205. *British History Online*, accessed October 31, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2184-2205>.

would affect him more than this..."³⁶ It seems at this point Wolsey is throwing caution to the wind, knowing of the possibility of his ill-fate.

Overall, Charles V is the biggest factors working against Henry and Wolsey. Trying to protect his aunt was important to him and as King of the Romans and Spain and soon to be Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, he had a lot of power and was able to make threats. Despite Henry being in great terms with the Pope as well as Wolsey, there is only so much the pope can do in his position. Henry made it clear what he would do if not granted as well as Charles making it clear what he will do. Charles even mentioned how he was angrier with England than France.³⁷ To make matters worse, it was also the year of 1528 that England experienced the Sweating Sickness again.

SICKNESS

The Sweating Sickness had had its rounds in England before 1528. It was first in England in 1485, again in 1506, a third time in 1517, and a fourth in 1528 and 1529 with symptoms being "characterized by profuse sweating during a period of 24 hours with a quick progression to either death or complete recovery."³⁸ As you can see, 1528 was the Fourth Epidemic which

³⁶ "Henry VIII: December 1528, 26-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2208-2254. *British History Online*, accessed October 31, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2208-2254>.

³⁷ "Henry VIII: December 1528, 2-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2170-2181. *British History Online*, accessed October 31, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2170-2181>.

³⁸ Holmes, "The Sweating Sickness,"

was in the very middle of the King's Matter when it was at its climax. This causes delays for Wolsey because of recovery time. The epidemic was rampant in England during this time and many people contracted it, including Wolsey himself.

The first letter in this collection mentioning "The sweats" was on June 21, 1528 when Tuke wrote to Wolsey, "His messenger found Mr. Treasurer sick of the sweat at Waltham."³⁹ Previously in the same month there were four other letters relating to sickness were either "in vesica" or of digestion which does not seem to be related to the Sweating Sickness.⁴⁰ Evidently, it was a very sick time in England. In July, Wolsey's servants seem to have gotten sick with the Sweat and eventually he would as well. The Sweat was nothing to be lax about, as Brian Tuke wrote on July 14, 1528 that, "The infection is greatly to be feared and avoided, which cannot be, if men meet together in great companies in infect airs and places."⁴¹ With that being said, meeting up with others during this time was dangerous. On August 14, 1528, Du Bellay wrote to Montmorency, "The day I sweated at my lord of Canterbury's there died 18 persons in four hours, and hardly anybody escaped but myself, who am not yet quite strong again."⁴² 1528 was essentially the climax of the discussion of the annulment and it was also even in the same few

³⁹ "Henry VIII: June 1528, 21-30," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1929-1947. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1929-1947>.

⁴⁰ "Henry VIII: June 1528, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1898-1911. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1898-1911>.

⁴¹ "Henry VIII: July 1528, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1965-1980. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1965-1980>.

⁴² "Henry VIII: July 1528, 21-25," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 1980-1987. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp1980-1987>.

months that the Pope had shifted from his original goals of helping the king to trying to create peace between the King and Queen. This is an example of how things culminated into making it essentially impossible for Wolsey to get the annulment for Henry.

It seems that after 1528 the Sweating Sickness dissipated in some way. After August the mention of the Sweating Sickness didn't come back up in the letters. But that does not mean that sickness was not still around. Come the very beginning of 1529, the Pope became sick. It is unclear exactly what the sickness is and based off the length of time that the Pope was sick it is extremely unlikely that it was the Sweating Sickness, but diagnosing any type of sickness this long ago in history is difficult. Whatever the sickness may have been, what is clear is that the Pope was very ill from January to April of 1529; he was extremely weak and unable to attend to regular business. Naturally, this had a large effect on the granting of the annulment. More importantly, this was in 1529 when things were becoming more pressed for Wolsey. January was the same month that we see evidence of Henry beginning to lay blame on Wolsey. On January 16, 1529, Inigo de Mendoza wrote to, we believe, Charles V, saying, "The King has told me that he has begun to lay the blame upon his Cardinal, who, he says, has not fulfilled his promises on the matter."⁴³ So the timing for Wolsey was extremely inconvenient, as less than a week before that was when news that the Pope was very sick came up. As mentioned before, what the Pope needed was time and patience, neither of which Wolsey nor Henry had. Henry

⁴³ "Henry VIII: January 1529, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2269-2283. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2269-2283>.

now had been trying for two years to get this annulment granted and Wolsey was now starting to get the blame.

I find it important to note that while Wolsey was beginning to get the blame, Henry still had at least some trust for him, if not completely. On February 4, 1529, Inigo de Mendoza wrote to, we believe, Charles V, "This lady [Anne Boleyn]...finding her marriage delayed...entertains great suspicion that this Cardinal of England puts impediments in her way...joined by her father, and the two dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk...but as yet they have made no impression on the King."⁴⁴ So while the King has begun to lay blame, he still was not taking to heart the negative things that those working against Wolsey were saying, but was purely fixated on the matters of the annulment. In the same letter mentioned before, it is written that, "he shows him in court not quite so good countenance as he did, and that he said some disagreeable words to him."⁴⁵ While Henry is angry with Wolsey, that still does not mean he does not have trust. But it is important to note that time frame indicated between blaming to complete lack of trust. At this point, Wolsey was getting the blame but still had his powers. Only eight months later Wolsey wrote an indenture between himself and the king and forfeited all his lands, offices and goods. Considering this began in 1527 and it took until mid-1529 for there

⁴⁴ "Henry VIII: February 1529, 1-15," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2313-2332. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2313-2332>.

⁴⁵ "Henry VIII: February 1529, 1-15," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2313-2332. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2313-2332>.

to be a more serious consequence actually being put forward; the downfall of Wolsey was quite rapid.

On March 3, 1529, Vannes wrote to Wolsey, "The Pope is unwell, and has not be able to receive us since the first salutation of which we wrote....The fever sometimes goes off beyond expectation, sometimes becomes most vehement."⁴⁶ This was unacceptable to Henry, as the matter of the annulment was the most pressing matter in England, or Europe as a whole for that matter, to Henry, and he was increasingly becoming angry. On April 6, 1529, Wolsey wrote to Gardiner, Brian, Casale, and Vannes saying, "Another part of their charge consists in the expedition of the King's cause of matrimony, which must not be delayed, whether the Pope has recovery or not. He could not refuse this justice to any man, and if the King desired anything unjust there would be no need for him to recur to the Pope."⁴⁷ The well-being of the Pope was not as important as the annulment was. Wolsey and Henry threw care to the wind and wrote with urgency. It is also at this point where the Pope began to become angry himself at both Wolsey and the King. On April 10, 1529, Sanga wrote to Campeggio,

While his Holiness was ill, and during his recovery, when every slight fatigue of business might cause a relapse, he thought the King would regard his delay as excusable. Consequently he has not hitherto been so anxious as he has now become, because, on the one hand, had, out of his desire to satisfy the King, commissioned the cardinals de Monte and S. Quatuor and Simonette to hear and report upon the petitions of the English ambassadors...He is highly displeased that the King and the cardinal of York

⁴⁶ "Henry VIII: March 1529, 2-15," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2351-2368. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2351-2368>.

⁴⁷ "Henry VIII: April 1529, 6-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2386-2400. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2386-2400>.

should entertain hopes of things which he cannot grant; for the more often they do so, the more grievous it seems to them not to obtain what they wish...⁴⁸

Obviously, wanting to help the King was getting him nowhere and until Henry had the annulment granted, the Pope would continue to be bombarded with letters concerning the matter. By July, the Pope would revoke the King's cause. The Pope himself being sick was a hinderance specifically in 1529 and this is important because this was the year that Wolsey succumbed to his demise. Sick or not, Henry must get his annulment. And it was becoming evident that Wolsey was for sure to get the blame if Henry did not get what he wanted, as on July 30, 1529, Inigo de Mendoza wrote to Charles, "The Queen has written to me that she perceives that all the King's anger at his ill success will be visited on Wolsey."⁴⁹ The King was a walking time bomb waiting to set off and Wolsey would be the first to feel the effects.

⁴⁸ "Henry VIII: April 1529, 6-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2386-2400. *British History Online*, accessed November 2, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2386-2400>.

⁴⁹ "Henry VIII: July 1529, 22-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2585-2598. *British History Online*, accessed November 6, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2585-2598>.

CHAPTER THREE

QUALIFICATION

I mentioned before my disagreement with the other historical argument that there were groups of nobles and the Boleyn family actively working against Wolsey, being the primary cause of fall. This teleological argument overlooks the other factors mentioned earlier in this thesis. The most significant thing it overlooks, is the matter of Henry and Wolsey's relationship. While there are letters showing there were some people speaking ill of Wolsey, there is not enough in this collection to make an argument that they were the primary cause of Wolsey's downfall, nor is there enough for me to consider it in my contingent circumstances that led to his demise.

Previously mentioned, the Pope laid blame on Wolsey for the first time on January 6, 1529. Before this, Wolsey seems to have been aware of the people working against him. On August 20, 1528, Du Bellay wrote to Montmorency, "saying he [Wolsey] required to use a terrible alchemy and dexterity in his affairs, for there were men who watched him so narrowly that they would take the first opportunity of calumniating him as being too strong a partisan of France..."⁵⁰ There are a few things to take away from this letter. One is that Wolsey was aware and working hard to not mess up, and two, that the anti-Wolsey factions were waiting for an

⁵⁰ "Henry VIII: August 1528, 11-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2008-2023. *British History Online*, accessed November 6, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2008-2023>.

“opportunity of calumniating him.” This is important because this statement makes it appear that while he had bad eyes on him, it does not necessarily mean that they were actively working against him. There was never a doubt that there were people that did not like Wolsey. But the only true opinion that matters in this situation is Henry’s. And it was only ten days after this letter that Hennege had written to Wolsey with a gift of the only deer he killed after ten hours of hunting, which is an example of a token of friendship. So, the relationship between Henry and Wolsey was still good at that time. The people working against him, or conspiring against him, were not having much success at the time according to this collection of letters.

But, on May 22, 1529, Du Bellay wrote to an unknown recipient, “The dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, and the others, lead the King to believe that he has not done as much as he could have done to promote the marriage.”⁵¹ The date here is important: this is getting to the middle of 1529 and is around when the tensions between the King and Wolsey had escalated, as he began to lay the blame on Wolsey only a few months beforehand, not due to what others were saying. There appears to be a shift, most likely more from anger than from advice, that it was Wolsey’s fault. After this, there is not another mention of others working against Wolsey in this collection of letters.

As previously mentioned, the most important aspect when analyzing this historiographical viewpoint is the relationship between Henry and Wolsey. Wolsey was more than just Lord High Chancellor to Henry; he was a friend, or possibly the closest thing to one, as

⁵¹ "Henry VIII: May 1529, 21-25," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2466-2473. *British History Online*, accessed November 6, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2466-2473>.

well as a high government official. Wolsey was the man who was a successful diplomat and helped Henry “gain his spurs” when he first became King. One example of their friendship is when Wolsey was sent a deer from Henry as a gift as mentioned in the previous paragraph. That was in 1528 when the annulment was almost at its climax. But most importantly, the most compelling argument for them having friendship throughout all this is actually the letter that states that the downfall of the Cardinal is complete on October 25, 1529. On this day, Chapuys writes to Charles,

The downfall of the Cardinal is complete. He is dismissed from the Council, deprived of the Chancellorship, and constrained to make an inventory of his goods in his own hand, that nothing may be forgotten. It is said that he has acknowledged his faults, and presented all his effects to the King. The King, either moved by pity, or for fear if he should die the whole extend of his effects would not be found, sent him a ring for his comfort. He has withdrawn with a small attendance to a place ten miles off.⁵²

The King, even after all of this, decided to send a ring to Wolsey for some comfort. While the latter option of “if he should die the whole extend of his effects would not be found,” is a possibility, it seems more likely that Henry may have had some guilt in what he was doing, or, maybe he was moved by Wolsey acknowledging his faults. These “faults” were not actually Wolsey’s faults, and based off all the letters it is more likely that Wolsey has simply given up and accepted his fate, knowing that there is nothing more he could do, and would rather give up. Regardless, Wolsey and Henry’s friendship is the main argument against the factions working against Wolsey. While they may have been around and/or working against him, they

⁵² "Henry VIII: October 1529, 17-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), 2675-2688. *British History Online*, accessed November 6, 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2675-2688>.

did not hold enough merit to Henry to be part of the reason for his downfall, as Henry seemed to consider Wolsey a friend, according to this collection of letters. The factions existed, but there is a dearth of letters in this collection that therefore leads me to make the assumption they did not have a lot of influence. To further understand this particularly would require possibly some research in the Public Royal Offices or other various sources.

CONCLUSION

Europe was going through a period of instability between the major powers. The Italian Wars were causing tension between the Holy Roman Empire and France, while at the same time Henry VIII in England was fighting for an annulment that the Pope wanted to give him, but was hindered by Charles V of Spain. On top of this, England and French relations were, as usual, unstable. While at this time, due to the Field of Cloth and Gold, Henry and Francis I of France had relatively good relations, there were still some tensions between each other and always will be.

There were other circumstances such as the Protestant Reformation happening. Both Henry VIII and Pope Clement VII were actively fighting against the heretic Martin Luther for multiple year prior to this "Secret Matter." The Protestant Reformation indirectly affects Henry and Wolsey by acting as another distraction for the Pope while Wolsey is attempting to get the annulment for Henry. This goes the same for the Sweating Sickness that was rampant in England in 1528. 1528 is when conversations and debates about the annulment became more frequent and Henry was getting pushier and pushier, so for the Sweating Sickness to have another wave throughout England during that time distracts more than just the Pope, but also both Wolsey and Henry. As mentioned in previous letters it was dangerous to meet in large groups so for the Pope to meet with a lot of others, or for his delegates to meet with many others, was dangerous. This also directly affects Wolsey as he ends up being sick with the

Sweats as well as his servants. With everyone being sick and gatherings being dangerous, it is difficult for Wolsey to be able to obtain the annulment for Henry.

Most importantly, there was Charles V actively working against Wolsey and Henry. Charles being the nephew of Catherine of Aragon, was quite opposed to the annulment. Charles was worried about the Christendom as a whole, but more importantly protecting his aunt. Charles works against Wolsey by actively sending letters to the Pope vehemently opposing this annulment and making threats, such as a war with the Spanish. The pope is frequently worried about his protection, and for good reason, as Rome was sacked in 1527 and Clement himself was imprisoned for a while. A threat of war was the last thing the Pope wanted. While the Pope wanted to help Henry, he still had to make a tough decision on who to help and consider the risk factors. Ultimately the Pope will revoke the cause and shortly after, Wolsey will fall from power.

The Italian Wars were the main topic of commentary between 1527 and 1528, and the annulment becoming a more discussed matter in about mid-1528 and 1529. With that being said, the downfall was not as gradual as originally argued. The argument was that in the summer of 1527, the relationship between Wolsey and Henry progressively worsened until his downfall in 1529. Although there were tensions between Wolsey and Henry, there was not really a lack of trust of Wolsey from Henry until 1529. This was not due to the anti-Wolsey factions that existed during this time. While the factions were existent, this teleological viewpoint of them being the reason why Wolsey fell ignores the personal relationship between Henry and Wolsey. This personal relationship made it to where the Henry consistently trusted

Wolsey despite his inability to get the annulment granted and the anti-Wolsey factions “fighting” against him. Therefore, even though there may have been tension between the two, Henry consistently had trust in Wolsey and the downfall of Wolsey was ultimately a quick turn of events in 1529.

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