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K. J. Kesselring

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Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State

Using a wide range of legal, administrative and literary sources, this study explores the role of the royal pardon in the exercise and experience of authority in Tudor England. It examines such abstract intangibles as power, legitimacy, and the state by looking at the concrete life-and-death decisions of the Tudor monarchs.

Drawing upon the historiographies of law and society, political culture, and state formation, this work uses mercy as a lens through which to examine the nature and limits of participation in the early modern polity. Contemporaries discussed mercy as a virtue expected of all but necessary in the prince: they deemed it both a prerogative and a duty of the ruler. The Tudors responded with grand ceremonies of mercy, personal gifts of grace for offenders of every sort, and statutes that offered remission for a host of petty sins. Public expectations of mercy and the broadly participatory nature of early modern governance imposed restraints on the sovereign's exercise of power. Yet the discretionary uses of punishment and mercy worked in tandem to mediate social relations of power in ways that most often favored the growth of the state.

K. J. KESSELRING is Assistant Professor of History, Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

APC	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> . Ed. J.R. Dascent, 32 vols. (London, 1800–1907)
BL	British Library
CAR	<i>Calendar of Assize Records: Home Circuit Indictments, Elizabeth I and James I</i> . Ed. J.S. Cockburn, 10 vols. (London, 1975–82)
CJ	<i>Journal of the House of Commons</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls</i>
CSP	<i>Calendar of State Papers</i>
EL	Ellesmere
HA	Hastings
HEH	Henry E. Huntington Library
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
L&P	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. J.S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, 21 vols. and Addenda (London, 1864–1932)
LIS	<i>List and Index Society</i>
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
LJ	<i>Journal of the House of Lords</i>
TRP	<i>Tudor Royal Proclamations</i> . Ed. P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin, 3 vols. (New Haven, 1964–69).

Throughout this work, modern spelling and punctuation have been used in all quotations, even for those taken from printed sources. When dates are given, the year is assumed to have begun on 1 January. All manuscript references are to the Public Record Office unless otherwise noted and are quoted by the call numbers in use at each repository (see the bibliography for the class designations). For parliamentary acts, the *Statutes of the Realm*, ed. A. Luders et al., 11 vols. (London, 1810–28) has been used, but citations are made by regnal year and chapter.