

The Church of England and King Henry VIII

Central Historical Question:

Did King Henry VIII create the Anglican Church to establish religious freedom for England or did he just want more power? Should it matter to historians?

Document #1 Act in Restraint of Appeals Made by English Parliament 1533

England is an empire governed by one supreme King who has the power of an imperial crown. The people of England owe the King obedience second only to their obedience to God. The King is given his power, importance, authority, and right to make laws within his realm by Almighty God himself.

From now on when any of the divine laws come in question, it will be interpreted by the English Church, without the involvement of any outsiders, such as the Pope. The King may also make laws to protect the rights and liberties of the imperial crown of England. This will keep us safe from attacks from Rome and any other foreign ruler attempting to weaken or destroy us.

This includes laws that have been created because of disagreements with Rome about matrimony and divorces, required payments and gifts to the Church. These cause great trouble and costs of the King's Highness and the English people. This must all happen because the great distance and difference between England and Rome makes it impossible for Rome to know the true cause of an English problem and therefore cannot help solve the problem.

Document #2- Act of Supremacy Made by Parliament 1534

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. By the authority of this Parliament, the king, his heirs and successors, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England, called Anglicans Ecclesia.

Document #3 The First Act of Succession Made by English Parliament 1534

This present Parliament, your most humble and obedient subjects, believe ourselves bound to provide for the perfect security of both you, and your heirs, upon which depends all the joy and wealth of this realm.

This Parliament *abhors and detests* the Roman Church's involvement in the lives and rule of emperors, kings and princes out of their own self interest when doing so is against the powers given to those rulers by God.

To ensure the success of this Act, people shall swear an oath to truly, firmly, and constantly observe, fulfill, maintain, and defend this Act. Any person who refuses to take the Oath shall be considered guilty of high treason; and shall suffer such pains and imprisonment, losses and forfeitures, and also lose privileges of sanctuaries, in like manner and form as is above mentioned for the misprisions of treasons afore limited by this Act.

Document #4- Account of the executions of John Fisher & Thomas More Written by the Tudor chronicler Edward Hall 1535

This year three monks were condemned of high treason against the king, and sentenced to be drawn, hanged, disemboweled, beheaded and quartered. John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, was also condemned for treason. The jury ruled he should be hanged, cut down alive, his bowels taken out of his body and burnt before him, his head cut off, and his body be divided into four parts and his head and body be set in such places as the king should assign. The effect of the treason was denying the king to be Supreme Head of the Church of England.

This year also, Sir Thomas More, sometime chancellor of England, was arraigned for high treason and condemned. He was beheaded and his head was set on London Bridge. The effect of his death was for the same cause that the bishop of Rochester died for.