

## Tudor Documents

*Since Pope Clement VII, for purely political reasons, would not give King Henry VIII a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, Henry broke from the Catholic Church and set up his own Church of England. "The Act of Supremacy," given below in full, was passed by Parliament in November, 1534.*

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 tranquillity of this realm ; any usage, foreign law, foreign authority, prescription, or any other thing or things to the contrary hereof notwithstanding.

*Numbers of conscientious persons were now arrested for declining to swear that Henry's first marriage was void, and for refusing to deny the supremacy of the pope. The most distinguished victims were Bishop Fisher, who had supported Catherine, and Sir Thomas More, a former friend and minister of Henry, who nonetheless refused to abandon his Catholic faith. Here's an account of their deaths by Edward Hall, whose Chronicle was also one of the chief sources used by Shakespeare in his history plays.*

The twenty-second day of the same month John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, was beheaded, and his head set upon London Bridge. This bishop was of very many men lamented; for he was reported to be a man of great learning, and a man of very good life, but therein wonderfully deceived, for he maintained the pope to be supreme head of the Church, and very maliciously refused the king's title of supreme head. It was said that the pope, for that he held so manfully with him and stood so stiffly

in his cause did elect him cardinal, and sent the cardinal's hat as far as Calais, but the head it should have stood on was as high as London Bridge before the hat could come to Bishop Fisher. . . ,

Also the sixth day of July was Sir Thomas More beheaded for the like treason before rehearsed, which, as you have heard, was for the denying of the king's Majesty's supremacy. This man was also counted learned, and, as you have heard before, he was lord chancellor of England, and in that time a great persecutor of such as detested the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, which he himself so highly favored that he stood to it until he was brought to the scaffold on the Tower Hill, where on a block his head was stricken from his shoulders and had no more harm.

I cannot tell whether I should call him a foolish wise man or a wise foolish man, for undoubtedly he, beside his learning, had a great wit, but it was so mingled with taunting and mocking, that it seemed to them that best knew him that he thought nothing to be well spoken except he had ministered some mock in the communication, insomuch as at his coming to the Tower one of the officers demanded his upper garment for his fee, meaning his gown, and he answered he should have it and took him his cap, saying that it was the uppermost garment that he had. Likewise, even going to his death at the Tower gate, a poor woman called unto him and besought him to declare that he had certain evidence of hers in the time that he was in office (which after he was apprehended she could not come by), and that he would entreat she might have them again, or else she was undone. He answered, " Good woman, have patience a little while, for the king is so good unto me that even within this half hour he will discharge me of all business, and help thee himself." Also when he went up the stair on the scaffold he desired one of the sheriff's officers to give him his hand to help him up, and said, " When I come down again let me shift for myself as well as I can."

Also the hangman kneeled down to him asking him forgiveness of his death (as the manner is), to whom he said, " I forgive thee, but I promise thee that thou shalt never have honesty of the striking of my head, my neck is so short." Also even when he should lay down his head on the block he, having a great gray beard, struck out his beard, and said to the hangman, " I pray you let me lay my beard over the block lest ye should cut it." Thus with a mock he ended his life.

*When Henry VIII died, his crown passed to his young son, Edward VI, made famous in Mark Twain's novel The Prince and the Pauper. Young Edward, who was a devout Protestant and avid little Greek scholar, was perhaps not as attractive as Twain makes him out to be. He fell sick and died, probably of Tuberculosis, at the age of 18, which meant that the crown passed to his older sister Mary, the Catholic daughter of Catherine of Aragon. Mary brought back the Catholic faith to England along with her hated husband, King Philip II of Spain. She killed so many Protestants (as in one of her execution orders printed below) that the vodka cocktail "Bloody Mary" is named after her. Relative religious peace only returned to England when Mary died of cancer and passed on the crown to her younger sister Elizabeth, who brought back her father's Protestant Church.*

Whereas John Hooper, who of late was called bishop of Rochester and Gloucester, by due order of the laws ecclesiastic, condemned and judged for a most obstinate, false, detestable heretic, and committed to our secular power, to be burned according to the wholesome and good laws of our realm in that case provided; forasmuch as in those cities, and the diocese thereof, he has in times past preached and taught most pestilent heresies and doctrine to our subjects there, we have therefore

given order that the said Hooper, who yet persisteth obstinate, and hath refused mercy when it was graciously offered, shall be put to execution in the said city of Gloucester, for the example and terror of such as he has there seduced and mistaught, and because he hath done most harm there

...And forasmuch also as the said Hooper is, as heretics be, a vainglorious person, and delighteth in his tongue, and, having liberty, may use his said tongue to persuade such as he hath seduced, to persist in the miserable opinion that he hath sown among them, our pleasure is therefore, and we require you to take order, that the said Hooper be neither, at the time of his execution, nor in going to the place thereof, suffered to speak at large, but thither to be led quietly and in silence, for eschewing of further infection and such inconvenience as may otherwise ensue in this part. Wherefore fail not, as ye tender our pleasure.

*The fight (and eventual victory) against the great fleet, or Armada, that Philip II of Spain unleashed against England in 1588 is probably the most famous event in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The Queen herself rode down to Tillbury to speak to the troops preparing to fend off the feared invasion, and a version of her speech has been preserved:*

My loving people, I have been persuaded by some that are careful of my safety to take heed how I committed myself to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery. But I tell you that I would not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear: I have so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects. Wherefore I am come among you at this time but for my recreation and pleasure, being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live and die amongst you all, to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people mine honor and my blood even in the dust.

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too—and take foul scorn that Parma or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm. To the which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will venter my royal blood; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of your virtue in the field. I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fail of them. In the meantime, my lieutenant general [Leicester] shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject. Not doubting but by your concord in the camp and valor in the field and your obedience to myself and my general, we shall shortly have a famous victory over these enemies of my God and of my kingdom.

*We also have a letter from John Hawkins, the famous English mariner, who participated in the fight against the Armada, and who gives a lively notion of the conflict, which was in progress as he wrote.*

My bounden duty humbly remembered unto your good lordship. I have not busied myself to write often to your lordship in this great cause, for that my lord admiral doth continually advertise the manner of all things that doth pass. So do others that do understand the state of all things as well as myself. We met with this fleet somewhat to the westward of Plymouth upon Sunday in the morning, being the 21st of July, where we had some small fight with them in the afternoon. By the coming aboard one of the other of the Spaniards, a great ship, a Biscayan, spent her foremast and

bowsprit, which was left by the fleet in the sea, and so taken up by Sir Francis Drake the next morning. The same Sunday there was, by a fire chancing by a barrel of powder, a great Biscayan spoiled and abandoned, which my lord took up and sent away. The Tuesday following, athwart of Portland, we had a sharp and long fight with them, wherein we spent a great part of our powder and shot, so as it was not thought good to deal with them any more till that was relieved.

The Thursday following, by the occasion of the scattering of one of the great ships from the fleet which we hoped to have cut off, there grew a hot fray, wherein some store of powder was spent; and after that little done until we came near to Calais, where the fleet of Spain anchored, and our fleet by them; and because they should not be in peace there, to refresh their water or to have conference with those of the duke of Parma's party, my lord admiral, with firing of ships, determined to remove them; as he did, and put them to the seas; in which broil the chief galleass spoiled her rudder, and so rode ashore near the town of Calais, where she was possessed of our men, but so aground that she could not be brought away.

That morning being Monday, the 29th of July, we followed the Spaniards, and all that day had with them a long and great fight, wherein there was great valor showed generally by our company. In this battle there was spent very much of our powder and shot; and so the wind began to blow westerly, a fresh gale, and the Spaniards put themselves somewhat to the northward, where we follow and keep company with them. . . .

Our ships, God be thanked, have received little hurt, and are of great force to accompany them, and of such advantage that with some continuance at the seas, and sufficiently provided of shot and powder, we shall be able, with God's favor, to weary them out of the sea and confound them. Yet as I gather certainly, there are amongst them fifty forcible and invincible ships. There are thirty hulks and thirty small ships, whereof little account is to be made. . . .

At their departing from Lisbon the soldiers were twenty thousand, the mariners and others eight thousand; so as, in all, they were twenty-eight thousand men. Their commission was to confer with the prince of Parma, as I learn, and then proceed to the service that should be there concluded; and so the duke to return into Spain with these ships and mariners, the soldiers and their furniture being left behind. Now this fleet is here and very forcible, and must be waited upon with all our force, which is little enough. There should be an infinite quantity of powder and shot provided and continually sent abroad; without the which great hazard may grow to our country; for this is the greatest and strongest combination, to my understanding, that ever was gathered in Christendom; therefore I wish it, of all hands, to be mightily and diligently looked into and cared for. . . .

And so, praying to God for a happy deliverance from the malicious and dangerous practice of our enemies, I humbly take my leave. From the sea, aboard the Victory, the last of July, 1588.

The Spaniards take their course for Scotland; my lord doth follow them. I doubt not, with God's favor, but we shall impeach their landing. There must be order for victual and money, powder and shot, to be sent after us. Your lordship's humbly to command,

JOHN HAWKYNS.