

Primary Source Readings

AP European History



The English Reformation

Document 2.8	Henry VIII, <i>Defense of the Seven Sacraments</i> What was Henry's initial response to Martin Luther's efforts to reform the Church in Germany? What do Henry's views say about his actions later?
Document 2.9	The Act of Supremacy (1534) The official Act of Parliament declaring the Church of England separate from the Church of Rome
Document 2.10	John Knox, <i>The First Blast of the Trumpet...</i> John Knox, the Protestant leader of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, wrote this pamphlet to attack Mary I.
Document 2.11	The Martyrdom of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer As you read this document, think about what you might have done in the same situation as Cranmer. Do you judge him for his actions or do you sympathize with him? Also, consider the POV/CAP implications of Cranmer's last public speech.
Document 2.12	Act Against Jesuits and Seminarists (1585) Consider your previous knowledge of the Counter-Reformation as context for this reading. Why did Elizabeth and Parliament want to ban Jesuits from England?

Excerpts From Henry VIII, *Defense of the Seven Sacraments* (1521)

Document 2.8

Conclusion

We have in this little book, gentle reader, clearly demonstrated, I hope, how absurdly and impiously Luther has handled the holy sacraments. For though we have not touched all things contained in his book, yet so far as was necessary to defend the sacraments (which was our only design), I suppose I have treated, though not so sufficiently as might have been done, yet more than is even necessary....

But that others may understand how false and wicked his doctrine is, lest they might be so far deceived as to have a good opinion of him, I doubt not but in all parts there are very learned men... who have much more clearly discovered the same, than can be shown by me. And if there be any who desire to know this strange work of his, I think I have sufficiently made it apparent to them. For seeing by what has been said, it is evident to all men what sacrilegious opinions he has of the sacrament of our Lord's Body, from which the sanctity of all the other sacraments flow: who would have doubted, if I had said nothing else, how unworthily, without scruple, he treats all the rest of the sacraments? Which, as you have seen, he has handled in such sort that he abolishes and destroys them all, except Baptism alone....

What everybody believes, he alone by his vain reason laughs at, denouncing himself to admit nothing but clear and evident Scriptures. And these, too, if alleged by any against him, he either evades by some private exposition of his own, or else denies them to belong to their own authors.¹ None of the Doctors are so ancient, none so holy, none of so great authority in treating of Holy Writ, but this new doctor, this little saint, this man of learning, rejects with great authority.

Seeing, therefore, he despiseth all men and believes none, he ought not to take it ill if everybody discredit him again. I am so far from holding any further dispute with him that I almost repent myself of what I have already argued against him. For what avails it to dispute against one who disagrees with everyone, even with himself? Who affirms in one place what he denies in another, denying what he presently affirms? Who, if you object faith, combats by reason; if you touch him with reason, pretends faith? If you allege philosophers, he flies to Scripture; if you propound Scripture, he trifles with sophistry. Who is ashamed of nothing, fears none, and thinks himself under no law. Who contemns the ancient Doctors of the church, and derides the new ones in the highest degree; loads with reproaches the Chief Bishop of the church. Finally, he so undervalues customs, doctrine, manners, laws, decrees and faith of the church (yea, the whole church itself) that he almost denies there is any such thing as a church, except perhaps such a one as himself makes up of two or three heretics, of whom himself is chief.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. On what grounds did Henry VIII dispute Martin Luther?
2. How would you describe Henry VIII's general opinion of Martin Luther as a person?

¹ Luther questioned the apostolic authorship of the Epistle of James, which, conveniently for Luther, emphasized the importance of good works for the attainment of salvation. For further reading, see Luther's [Preface to the New Testament](#) and [Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude](#)

The Act of Supremacy (1534)

Document

2.9

Albeit the king's majesty firstly 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. . . 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. . . 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, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities to the said dignity of supreme head of the same Church. . . 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, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offenses, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be...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....

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. CONTEXT: What events precipitated this Act? [Your textbook would be a big help, here]
2. What was established by this Act and by whose authority was it established?
3. How had Henry's views regarding the Catholic Church changed since 1521?

From John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558)

Source: <http://www.swrb.ab.ca/newslett/actualNLS/firblast.htm#FN146>

Document 2.10

I fear not to say, that the day of vengeance, which shall apprehend that horrible monster Jezebel of England, and such as maintain her monstrous cruelty, is already appointed in the counsel of the eternal. And I verily believe that it is so nigh, that she shall not reign so long in tyranny as hitherto she has done,² when God shall declare himself to be her enemy, when he shall pour forth contempt upon her according to her cruelty, and shall kindle the hearts of such as sometimes did favour her with deadly hatred against her, that they may execute his judgments. And therefore, let such as assist her take heed what they do; for assuredly her empire and reign is a wall without foundation.³ I mean the same of the authority of all women. It has been underpropped this blind time that is past, with the foolishness of people, and with the wicked laws of ignorant and tyrannical princes. But the fire of God's word is already laid to those rotten props (I include the pope's law with the rest), and presently they burn, albeit we espy not the flame. When they are consumed (as shortly they will be, for stubble and dry timber cannot endure the fire), that rotten wall, the usurped and unjust empire of women, shall fall by itself in despite of all men, to the destruction of so many as shall labour to uphold it. And therefore let all men be advertised, for the trumpet has once blown.

Praise God, ye that fear him (Ps. 22:23).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What events caused John Knox to write this treatise?
2. How would you evaluate Knox's arguments?
3. How could Knox's authorship of this work later have a negative impact on his standing with the English monarchy?

² This prediction of Knox as to the speedy termination of Queen Mary's reign, whom he here styles Jezebel of England, proved correct. She died in the sixth year of her reign, on the 17th of November, or within seven or eight months of the publication of *The First Blast*.

³ *Marginal note*: The authority of all women is a wall without foundation

The Martyrdom of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer From Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*

Document
2.11

From the Christian Classics Ethereal Library: <http://www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/fox116.htm>

CHAPTER XVI, Persecutions in England During the Reign of Queen Mary

Thomas Cranmer served as the Archbishop of Canterbury (the highest office in the English Church) under Henry VIII and Edward VI. During his tenure, he promoted a number of modest reforms within the Church of England and authored the Book of Common Prayer, the service book of the Anglican Church. Cranmer fell into disfavor under the reign of Mary I, Henry VIII's Catholic daughter who is otherwise remembered as "Bloody Mary."

The following excerpts are taken from Foxe's Book of Martyrs, a Protestant chronicle of [mostly] English Protestant martyrs, published early in the reign of Elizabeth I, who re-established Protestantism in England.

Archbishop Cranmer

The death of Edward, in 1553, exposed Cranmer to all the rage of his enemies. Though the archbishop was among those who supported Mary's accession, he was attainted at the meeting of Parliament, and in November adjudged guilty of high treason at Guildhall, and degraded from his dignities...

Treason was a charge quite inapplicable to Cranmer, who supported the queen's right; while others, who had favored [Lady Jane](#) were dismissed upon paying a small fine. A calumny was now spread against Cranmer that he complied with some of the **popish** ceremonies to ingratiate himself with the queen, which he dared publicly to disavow, and justified his articles of faith. The active part which the prelate had taken in the divorce of Mary's mother had ever rankled deeply in the heart of the queen,⁴ and revenge formed a prominent feature in the death of Cranmer...

Cranmer was gradually degraded, by putting mere rags on him to represent the dress of an archbishop; then stripping him of his attire, they took off his own gown, and put an old worn one upon him instead. This he bore unmoved, and his enemies, finding that severity only rendered him more determined, tried the opposite course, and placed him in the house of the dean of Christ-church, where he was treated with every indulgence.

This presented such a contrast to the three years' hard imprisonment he had received, that it threw him off his guard. His open, generous nature was more easily to be seduced by a liberal conduct than by threats and fetters. When Satan finds the Christian proof against one mode of attack, he tries another; and what form is so seductive as smiles, rewards, and power, after a long, painful imprisonment? Thus it was with Cranmer: his enemies promised him his former greatness if he would but recant, as well as the queen's favor, and this at the very time they knew that his death was determined in council...

[Unaware that he was going to be executed, regardless, Cranmer recanted his Protestant teachings and affirmed the authority of the Catholic Church and the Pope. Cranmer's recantation was printed and distributed throughout England, causing him public embarrassment in addition to his private remorse.]

"Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall!" said the apostle, and here was a falling off indeed! The **papists** now triumphed in their turn: they had acquired all they wanted short of his life. His recantation was immediately printed and dispersed, that it might have its due effect upon the astonished Protestants. But God counter-worked all the designs of the Catholics by the extent to which they carried the implacable persecution of their prey. Doubtless, the love of life induced Cranmer to sign the above declaration: yet death may be said to have been preferable to life to him who lay under the stings of a goaded conscience and the contempt of every Gospel Christian; this principle he strongly felt in all its force and anguish.

The queen's revenge was only to be satiated by Cranmer's blood, and therefore she wrote an order to Dr. Pole, to prepare a sermon to be preached March 21, directly before his martyrdom, at St. Mary's, Oxford. Dr. Pole visited him the day previous, and was induced to believe that he would publicly deliver his sentiments in confirmation of the articles to which he had subscribed. About nine in the morning of the day of sacrifice, the queen's commissioners, attended by the magistrates, conducted the amiable unfortunate to St. Mary's Church. His torn, dirty garb, the same in which they habited him upon his degradation, excited the commiseration of the people. In the church he found a low mean stage, erected opposite to the pulpit, on which being placed, he turned his face, and fervently prayed to God.

⁴ Cranmer had supported Henry VIII's decision to divorce Mary's mother, Catherine of Aragon.

The church was crowded with persons of both persuasions, expecting to hear the justification of the late apostasy: the Catholics rejoicing, and the Protestants deeply wounded in spirit at the deceit of the human heart. Dr. Pole, in his sermon, represented Cranmer as having been guilty of the most atrocious crimes; encouraged the deluded sufferer not to fear death, not to doubt the support of God in his torments, nor that Masses would be said in all the churches of Oxford for the repose of his soul. The doctor then noticed his conversion, and which he ascribed to the evident working of Almighty power and in order that the people might be convinced of its reality, asked the prisoner to give them a sign. This Cranmer did, and begged the congregation to pray for him, for he had committed many and grievous sins; but, of all, there was one which awfully lay upon his mind, of which he would speak shortly.

During the sermon Cranmer wept bitter tears: lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, and letting them fall, as if unworthy to live: his grief now found vent in words: before his confession he fell upon his knees, and, in the following words unveiled the deep contrition and agitation which harrowed up his soul.

"O Father of heaven! O Son of God, Redeemer of the world! O Holy Ghost, three persons all one God! have mercy on me, most wretched caitiff and miserable sinner. I have offended both against heaven and earth, more than my tongue can express. Whither then may I go, or whither may I flee? To heaven I may be ashamed to lift up mine eyes and in earth I find no place of refuge or succor. To Thee, therefore, O Lord, do I run; to Thee do I humble myself, saying, O Lord, my God, my sins be great, but yet have mercy upon me for Thy great mercy. The great mystery that God became man, was not wrought for little or few offences. Thou didst not give Thy Son, O Heavenly Father, unto death for small sins only, but for all the greatest sins of the world, so that the sinner return to Thee with his whole heart, as I do at present. Wherefore, have mercy on me, O God...

"And now forasmuch as I am come to the last end of my life... I shall therefore declare unto you my very faith how I believe, without any color of dissimulation: for now is no time to [beat around the bush]...

"First, I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, etc. And I believe every article of the Catholic faith, every word and sentence taught by our Savior Jesus Christ, His apostles and prophets, in the New and Old Testament.

"And now I come to the great thing which so much troubleth my conscience, more than any thing that ever I did or said in my whole life, and that is the setting abroad of a writing contrary to the truth, which now here I renounce and refuse, as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life, if it might be; and that is, all such bills or papers which I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation, wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand hath offended, writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished; for when I come to the fire it shall first be burned.

"And as for the pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy, and Antichrist, with all his false doctrine."

Upon the conclusion of this unexpected declaration, amazement and indignation were conspicuous in every part of the church. The Catholics were completely foiled, their object being frustrated, Cranmer, like [Samson](#), having completed a greater ruin upon his enemies in the hour of death, than he did in his life.

Cranmer would have proceeded in the exposure of the popish doctrines, but the murmurs of the idolaters drowned his voice, and the preacher gave an order to "lead the heretic away!" The savage command was directly obeyed, and the lamb about to suffer was torn from his stand to the place of slaughter, insulted all the way by the revilings and taunts of the pestilent monks and friars.

With thoughts intent upon a far higher object than the empty threats of man, he reached the spot dyed with the blood of [Ridley](#) and [Latimer](#).⁵ There he knelt for a short time in earnest devotion, and then arose, that he might undress and prepare for the fire. Two friars who had been parties in prevailing upon him to abjure, now endeavored to draw him off again from the truth, but he was steadfast and immovable in what he had just professed, and publicly taught. A chain was provided to bind him to the stake, and after it had tightly encircled him, fire was put to the fuel, and the flames began soon to ascend.

Then were the glorious sentiments of the martyr made manifest; then it was, that stretching out his right hand, he held it unshrinkingly in the fire until it was burnt to a cinder, even before his body was injured, frequently exclaiming, "This unworthy right hand."

⁵ Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, Cranmer's cohorts who were also martyred during the reign of Mary I.

Act Against Jesuits and Seminarists (1585)

Passed during the reign of Elizabeth I

Hanover Historical Texts: <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/ENGref/er85.html>

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2.12

Whereas divers persons called or professed Jesuits, seminary priests, and other priests, which have been, and from time to time are made in the parts beyond the seas, by or according to the order and rites of the Romish Church, have of late years come and been sent, and daily do come and are sent, into this realm of England and other the queen's majesty's dominions, of purpose (as has appeared, as well by sundry of their own examinations and confessions, as by divers other manifest means and proofs) not only to withdraw her highness's subjects from their due obedience to her majesty, but also to stir up and move sedition, rebellion, and open hostility within the same her highness's realms and dominions, to the great endangering of the safety of her most royal person, and to the utter ruin, desolation, and overthrow of the whole realm, if the same be not the sooner by some good means foreseen and prevented.

For reformation whereof be it ordained, established, and enacted by the queen's most excellent majesty, and the Lords spiritual and temporal, and the Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same Parliament, that all and every Jesuits, seminary priests, and other priests whatsoever made or ordained out of the realm of England or other her highness's dominions, or within any of her majesty's realms or dominions, by any authority... shall within forty days next after the end of this present session of Parliament depart out of this realm of England, and out of all other her highness's realms and dominions, if the wind, weather, and passage shall serve for the same, or else so soon after the end of the said forty days as the wind, weather, and passage shall so serve.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that it shall not be lawful to or for any Jesuit, seminary priest, or other such priest, deacon, or religious or ecclesiastical person whatsoever... to come into, be, or remain in any part of this realm, or any other her highness's dominions, after the end of the same forty days, other than in such special cases, and upon such special occasions only, and for such time only, as is expressed in this Act; and if he do, that then every such offence shall be taken and adjudged to be high treason; and every person so offending shall for his offence be adjudged a traitor, and shall suffer, lose, and forfeit, as in case of high treason.

And every person which after the end of the same forty days... shall wittingly and willingly receive, relieve, comfort, aid, or maintain any such Jesuit, seminary priest, or other priest, deacon, or religious or ecclesiastical person... shall also for such offence be adjudged a felon, without benefit of clergy, and suffer death, lose, and forfeit, as in case of one attainted of felony.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

PURPOSE

What was the stated purpose of this Act?

CONTEXT

Why would Queen Elizabeth and Parliament have seen this Act as necessary and beneficial for the peace and security of the English state?
