

The Reformation

PLAY 4:

Henry VIII's Break with Rome

Henry VIII is in his palace with Thomas Cromwell (his main minister and adviser) when his good friend Thomas More comes to see him.

Characters:

Messenger

Henry VIII

Thomas More

Thomas Cromwell

Messenger: Your Majesty, I present to you Sir Thomas More.

Henry VIII: My friend, how are you?

Thomas More: Good! Very good, thank you.

Henry VIII: What brought you here today? You look a little bit shaken?

Thomas More: Well, I am a bit puzzled. There are rumours that you no longer recognise the Pope as the Head of the Church!

Henry VIII: No, I don't. I am now the Head of the Church in England. I am "the Defender of the Faith."

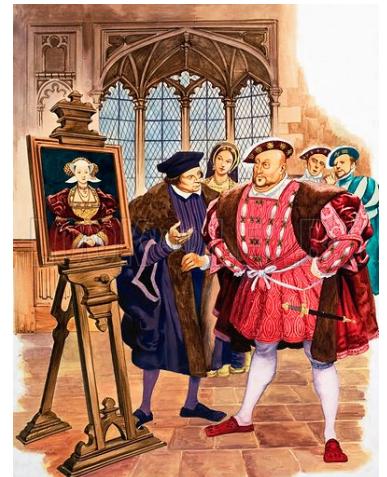
Thomas More: And why is that?

Henry VIII: Because old Pope Clement would not give me a divorce from Catherine. So, I had to take matters into my own hands. England no longer has anything to do with the Roman Catholic Church in Rome.

Cromwell: Yes, and as main minister and adviser to the king, I have suggested that king Henry also close all monasteries and nunneries.

Thomas More: But why?

Cromwell: Well, there are various reasons that could be used as an excuse for closing these religious houses!



Henry VIII: We need to close them, because we do not want any further connection with the Roman Catholic Church. There are about 10,000 monks and nuns and they are likely to be loyal to the Pope. But I don't want them to support the Roman Catholic Church. I want them to be loyal to me only!

Cromwell: And, what's more, King Henry is a bit short of money at the moment. Closing the monasteries and nunneries would mean that we, the Crown, can take all their land and their wealth.

Thomas More: That is a disgrace. You cannot justify that!

Cromwell: Actually, we can. The religious houses are, in any case, not doing their jobs properly. Many of the monks are drunk and spend their hours playing cards instead of praying or helping others.

Thomas More: Surely these are just rumours!

Cromwell: No, we have sent men to all the religious houses to investigate them. And their reports confirm that the monks and nuns are lazy and not really of any use to society.

Henry VIII: Even Martin Luther, that religious protestant of Germany, said that religious houses are not necessary. So, we are closing all 825 religious houses in England.

Cromwell: And the land, buildings and goods all come to the crown!

Thomas More: That is outrageous! Criminal!

Henry VIII: I don't like your attitude Thomas More. Even though you are my friend, I am your king and you are my subject!

Thomas More: Shame on you, Henry! How can you turn against the Roman Catholic Church?

Henry VIII: If I do not break completely with the Roman Catholic Church my divorce to Catherine would be illegitimate, and so would be my marriage to Anne. Don't you understand? That would mean that any children born to me by Anne would also be illegitimate.

Cromwell: Which would create a great dilemma! Because, if Anne give birth to a son, and we hope she will, then that son would be deemed illegitimate by the Roman Catholic Church.

Henry VIII: Which means that he would also be an illegitimate heir to the throne.

Cromwell: Which means that he cannot lawfully take our Henry VIII's place as king, when his majesty dies.

Messenger: Your majesty, the *Pilgrims of Grace* are here with a petition.

Henry VIII: The Pilgrims of what?

Messenger: The *Pilgrims of Grace*, your majesty.

Thomas More: It is a group of subjects who strongly disagree with the changes that you are making in the Church.

Messenger: Yes, your majesty, they joined together in a rebellion. And here is a list of their demands. (He hands over a list to Cromwell, who reads it to the king.)

Cromwell: “One, to destroy the new ideas of Luther that have been accepted in England. Two, to restore the power of the Pope. Three, to re-open the already closed down religious houses. Four, to punish Cromwell...!” (Cromwell almost choked - he is not impressed!)

Henry VIII: What shall we do? What do you advise, Cromwell?

Cromwell: Hang them! Execute them, your majesty!

Henry VIII: Well then, arrest all the rebels and put them in prison till execution day.

Thomas More: That would not be right, Henry. You will pay for your sins.

Cromwell: Starting with Thomas More, your majesty, for it seems that he is also rebelling against the king’s religious policies.

Henry VIII: (To Thomas More:) I am sorry, my friend. (To the messenger:) Take Sir Thomas More away first. Make sure that he is well looked after in prison. And have the rest of the rebels arrested as well.

☞ the end ☞

