

Thomas More: A Man For All Seasons

In A Man For All Seasons, Thomas More was found guilty of treason because he refused to support King Henry VIII's decision to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon. The King sought this divorce because he wanted to marry his mistress, Anne Boleyn. King Henry contended he was entitled to the divorce because Catherine had been married to Arthur, Henry's older brother. Upon Arthur's death, Catherine was betrothed to Henry. Although King Henry had received prior church approval to marry Catherine, he pointed out to the Pope that according to the Bible, it was wrong to marry your brother's wife.

More did not accept King Henry's argument. As More saw it, King Henry should not be allowed the divorce because his marriage had been approved previously by the Pope.

I believe that Thomas More was treated unfairly in A Man For All Seasons for two reasons. First, Henry promised to leave More out of the divorce proceedings, and then he broke that promise. Second, More was treated unjustly during his trials.

Early in the film, King Henry paid a visit to More, his chancellor. During the visit, it became apparent that the King thought of Thomas as more than a chancellor; he viewed More as a friend. Henry respected More's opinion, and became extremely frustrated with his many attempts to persuade More to accept the divorce. Finally, when the King realized that More could not accept the divorce, he promised to exempt More from any decisions pertaining to the divorce.

The leader of the divorce campaign was Thomas Cromwell, who was next in line for the chancellor's position. He framed More hoping that More would be forced to resign as chancellor. Cromwell then wrote an oath which forced people to prove they accepted King Henry's divorce. Even though the King had promised to keep More out of the proceedings, members of the King's council tried to persuade More to take the oath. More talked to his wife and daughter, and decided to take the oath only if the wording were ambivalent enough to hide his true beliefs. Unfortunately, the wording left no question. More decided on a new approach -- silence. Even though More remained silent and refused to take the oath, he was put on trial.

Soon after his refusal to take the oath, More was sent to the Tower. Eventually, he was brought to trial during which he was treated unjustly. More said that while he did not necessarily object to the King's divorce, he did not want to take the oath. More decided to resort to silence because an old English law stated that when people are silent, they are giving their approval. However, the jury in refusal to follow this law, found More guilty of treason, and sentenced him to death.

In Man For All Seasons, although Thomas More was treated unfairly, he was the only person who stood up for what he believed. Even when everyone else ignored their morals, More did not. Justice is defined as fairness and impartiality. I believe that Thomas More was treated neither fairly nor impartially. It was biased for the jury to ignore the English law which stated that silence gives approval. The jury was prejudice towards More because only More went against the King. This discrimination caused an innocent man to die, and that is not why the justice system was created. In being willing to die for his convictions, Thomas More proved he was truly "a man for all seasons."

