

Mary tudor and lady jane grey



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The power of Mary Tudor and Lady Jane Grey was deeply rooted in the religious and political upheaval of the time. England's royal family's succession has always been a tradition of rights and claims since William the Conqueror. Unless the King had a son, many claims could be made upon the throne from cousins, brothers, uncles, and so forth. The religious upheaval of the time also deeply impacted the power of both women. The ruler of England controlled the religion. Henry VIII was a Catholic until his divorce from Mary's mother. The Church of England, a Protestant Church, was established with Henry VIII as the head. All of these factors lead both Mary Tudor and Lady Jane Grey to the throne.

At the time of Lady Jane Grey's ascension to the throne for a mere nine days, she was not the only one with a claim to the throne. Her older sister, Margaret, had married James IV of Scotland which would make their children more of a direct line to the Tudor throne. However, Mary Tudor was a direct descendant of Henry VIII. If a woman was to become queen of all of England, Mary had more right than Lady Jane Grey. This would have been true if Henry the VIII had not declared her a bastard due to an annulled marriage with his first wife. So neither woman had a strong claim to the throne, but both became queen.

The religious tumult of the time combined into the politics to make both Lady Jane Grey and Mary Tudor queen. Lady Jane Grey, along with Henry VIII's successor, Edward VI favored the Protestant movement. Mary was a staunch Catholic. This made Protestant supporters favor Lady Jane, and Catholic supporters favored Mary. It was not a matter of the right or claim to throne at the time, but of which religion the English population favored.

Lady Jane was more of a pawn of her father and brothers than Mary. She was

more of a figurehead. For a region that had been Catholic for centuries, Protestants were seen as heretics. During the examination of Anne Askew, a Protestant, the following exchange occurred:

Then took he my book out of my hand and said, ‘ Such books as this hath brought you to the trouble you are in. Beware,’ sayeth he, ‘ beware, for he that made this book and was the author thereof was an heretic, I warrant you, and burnt in Smithfield.’ (Greenblatt et al)¹

Lady Jane might have had a better chance as a Catholic supporter. As it was, she was beheaded for treason at the Tower of London after nine days on the throne.

Mary Tudor had two reasons for wanting to be queen. The first would be the enforcement of the Catholic religion. The second reason was to prove her birth was legitimate. This second reason supported the first. If Henry VIII had acted illegally by divorcing his first wife, the Mary was legitimate and so was the Catholic Church. This made her sister Anne illegitimate, but that was Henry’s fault not Mary’s. Without the support of the Catholic Church, Mary would not have become queen. The Catholics wanted their land and money back that Henry VIII had taken. Aske pleaded:

First, to the statute of suppressions, he did grudge against the same and so did all the whole country, because the abbeyes in the north parts gave great alms to poor men and laudably served God; in which parts of late days they had but small comfort by ghostly teaching. (Greenblatt et al)²

If Mary had been a Protestant than her claim to the throne would have been as illegitimate as Henry had declared. With a Catholic stance Mary was able to come to the throne and rule until her death.

The supporters of the Protestants and Catholics also played a major part in

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putting these two women on the throne. Many men of the time thought that a queen would be a figurehead of their cause. Lady Jane and Mary proved that women could obtain the throne and rule.

Bibliography

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