

# Subject: History

Year: 7

## Week 2: How successful was Elizabeth's religious settlement?

You have already learnt about how important religion was to everyone in the Medieval period (1000-1500). Going to church was something everybody did and everybody believed in heaven and hell. In the 1500s every person in England was a Catholic.

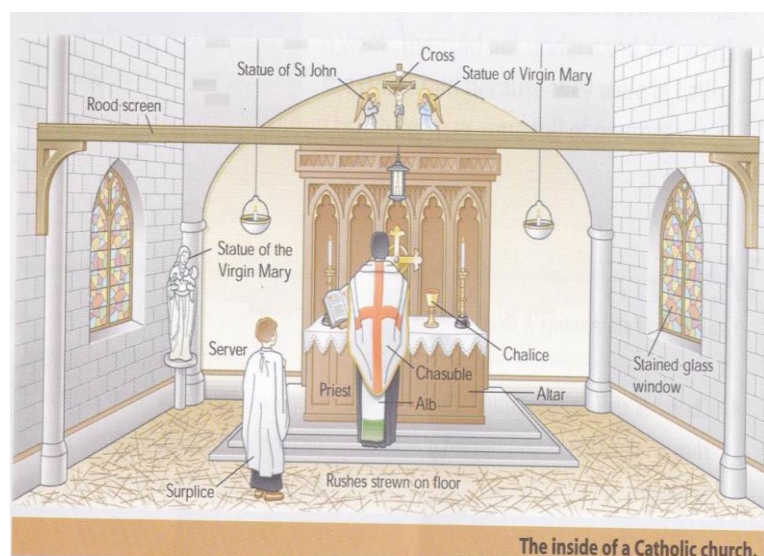
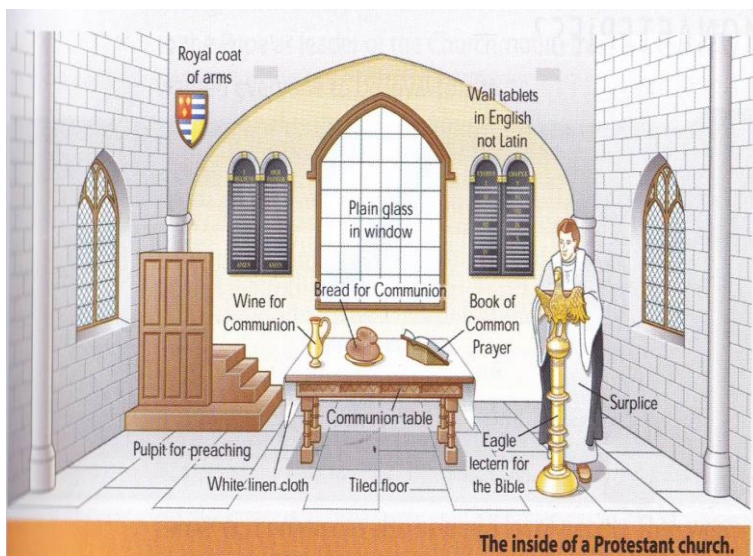
However, a growing number of people began to question the Catholic Church at this time. They believed that the church had lost its way and become *corrupt* (behaving badly). A monk in Germany called **Martin Luther** was not happy about this and he began a new way of worshipping called **Protestantism**. It was called this because these people were protesting against the old way of worship. They still believed in God, but felt this was a better way of worship.

The Catholic Church was too rich. People were giving their money to the church and bishops and monks were spending it on themselves.

The bible was read out in the ancient language called Latin. The majority of people could not understand this so church services meant very little to them.

Catholic priests were corrupt and lazy. They never visited their parishes or read the dying their last rites. Some even broke their vow of celibacy (got married)

Rich people could buy their way into heaven by buying indulgences. These were signed letters by the Pope which you could pay for to have your sins forgiven.




- 1) Write down 3 reasons why Protestants were unhappy with the Catholic Church.
- 2) Look at the images. Make a table with the heading Protestant one side and Catholic on the other. Note down the key differences with the way churches looked.



There were other **unseen** differences between the two churches as well. The head of the Catholic church was the **Pope** while the head of the Protestant church was Jesus Christ. Priests were allowed to marry in the Protestant church and only through worship could sins be forgiven – you could not buy letters of pardon. The bible and church services were also translated, from latin (a language which very few understood) into the spoken language of the country so that all could understand church services.

In 1536 Henry VIII made the country Protestant and himself head of the Church of England. Below is a summary of his reasons for doing this.

If we are going to understand these confusing actions, we need to know a little more about Henry's problems.



- **Henry wanted a son.** His wife, Catherine of Aragon, had given him a daughter, Mary, but no son. Catherine had had several miscarriages and it was clear that the chances of her giving birth to a healthy son were small. Henry believed that to make sure the Tudor dynasty survived he needed a son.  
By 1525 Henry had decided that he wanted a new wife to give him a son. Only the Pope could give Henry a divorce and the Pope refused.  
Meanwhile, Henry had fallen in love with Anne Boleyn. At the end of 1532 she was pregnant with Henry's child. In 1533 Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, acted on orders from Henry and declared Anne and Henry man and wife.
- **Henry was bankrupt.** He wanted to be powerful in Europe. He had already fought some very expensive wars in Europe and now desperately needed more money. The monasteries were very rich. They owned about a quarter of all the land in the country. If Henry took over the monasteries he would be very rich.
- **Henry wanted to control the Church.** Since medieval times there had been repeated struggles over whether the priests and Church leaders should obey the Pope or the king. (You will remember the battle between Archbishop Becket and King Henry II that led to Becket's murder.) The powerful monasteries were loyal to the Pope. Henry VIII resented an outsider being in control of so big a part of English life. He wanted to control the Church in his own country.

▼ **SOURCE 1** An extract from John Foxe's Book of Martyrs, about the burning of Latimer and Ridley, two Protestant bishops who refused to become Catholics

So they came to the stake. Dr Ridley, entering the place first, looked towards Heaven. Then, seeing Mr Latimer, with a cheerful look he ran and embraced him, saying, 'Be of good heart, brother, for God will either ease the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to endure it.'

He then went to the stake and, kneeling down, prayed with great fervour, while Mr Latimer following, kneeled down and prayed also. Dr Ridley gave presents of small things to men standing near, many of whom were weeping strongly. Happy was he who could get the smallest rag to remember this good man by. Then the blacksmith took a chain of iron and placed it about both their waists and then knocked in the staple.

Dr Ridley's brother brought him a bag of gunpowder and tied it about his neck. His brother did the same to Mr Latimer.

They then brought a lighted faggot and laid it at Dr Ridley's feet. Upon which Mr Latimer said, 'Be of good comfort, Mr Ridley, we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out.'

Mr Latimer cried out, 'Father of Heaven, receive my soul', and soon died with seeming little pain. But Dr Ridley, due to the bad arrangement of the fire (the faggots being green and piled so high, that the flames were kept down by the green wood), laboured in much pain until one of the bystanders pulled the faggots with a hook. Where Ridley saw the fire flame up, he leaned himself to that side. As soon as the fire touched the gunpowder he was seen to stir no more. The dreadful sight filled almost every eye with tears.

After Henry, Edward VI, his only son made the country even more protestant. After his death in 1553 his Catholic sister Mary I changed everything back to Catholic. She was given the nickname 'Bloody Mary' for burning at the stake (burning to death) 300 Protestants who refused to convert (change) their religious beliefs. When Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558 England had spent the last ten years torn between two different ways of worship.

**3) Add a few more ideas to your table from task 2 using the information at the top of the page.**

**4) Read Henry's reasons for making the country Protestant. How would they help him solve his problems of A) Needing more power B) Needing more money C) Needing an heir to the throne.**

**5) Read source 1 – what can you learn about Mary I's reign from this source?**

### ***What did Elizabeth do to religion in England?***

- I. When she became queen around half the country was Protestant. They hoped Elizabeth would wipe out Catholicism and attack Catholics the same way Mary I had to them. Some more extreme Protestants were called **puritans**. They believed that only the bible was necessary for worship and that all ceremonies and decorations were sinful. There were still many Catholics in England too and they believed that mass was the only way to get to heaven. Rich Catholics would hide Catholic priests in their homes in secret hiding places and hold mass in secret.
- II. When Elizabeth became Queen in the November of 1558, it was widely believed that she would restore the Protestant faith in England. Although Elizabeth had followed the Catholic faith during her sister's reign, she had been raised a Protestant and was committed to that faith. Elizabeth's religious views were remarkably tolerant for the age in which she lived. She believed fully in her own faith, but she also believed in religious toleration, and that Catholics and Protestants were both part of the same faith. "There is only one Christ, Jesus, one faith" she exclaimed later in her reign, "all else is a dispute over trifles."
- III. Her first action was to make herself the head of the church but as not to upset Catholics she did not refer to herself as Pope. Instead she called herself 'The Supreme Governor'. The Bible and Prayer Book were printed in English and churches were made simpler although still kept some features that were familiar to Catholics such as the crucifix and vestments (robes) for priests. bishops and cathedrals were kept from the reign of Mary I.
- IV. Catholics who refused to attend church services were fined. Those who plotted (planned) to remove her from throne were executed. A puritan who wrote a book criticizing (saying bad things) about the queen had his hand cut off.
- V. Elizabeth hoped that by retaining the Church as it was, people would become accustomed to it. She wanted her Church to be popular with her people, and for Catholicism to die out naturally as people turned to the religion she had established. In this she was largely successful, for by 1603, the English were generally Protestant, and Catholics were in the minority. Elizabeth had her own private chapel in most of her palaces, and reputedly prayed there everyday. She did not really approve of the clergy marrying as she expressed on several occasions, but as this was an integral aspect of Protestantism, she had to accept it.

- 6. What did Catholics and Protestants hope when Elizabeth became queen?**
- 7. What would Protestants have liked about her religious reforms?**
- 8. What would Catholics have liked about her religious reforms?**
- 9. How did Elizabeth deal with those who threatened her religious reforms?**
- 10. How successful was Elizabeth in solving the religious tensions/problems at this time? Explain your answer.**

### **Video Links**

[Reformation and Luther](#)

[Henry to Mary I](#)