

GCSE BRITISH HISTORY [9-1]

ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND 1558-1603

REVISION NOTES

SECTION 2 REVISION NOTES RELIGION, PURITANS AND CATHOLICS

Why religion was a major problem for Elizabeth

When Elizabeth became Queen in the November of 1558, she had to make some important decisions about the direction religion should take. Elizabeth had been raised a Protestant and it was widely expected that she would restore the Protestant faith in England. Mary I's persecution of Protestants had done much damage to the reputation of Catholicism in England. There had been confusion and tension over religion when Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church and started the English Reformation. Edward VI was a committed Protestant and Mary I a Catholic. Elizabeth could not accept the idea that arguments over religion would continue as they had in the previous thirty years. She tried to find a 'middle way' that both Catholics and Protestants would accept. This would not be easy however. On the death of Mary I, many extreme Protestants returned from Europe (where they had fled for their own safety during the reign of Mary) and expected Elizabeth to establish a full Protestant Church. Also, many Catholics had remained in England on Elizabeth's accession.

How Protestantism was different from Catholicism in the 16th Century

Roman Catholics	Protestants
The Pope is Head of the Church.	The ruler is Head of the Church.
The Church and priests forgive your sins if you go to church do good works.	Only God can forgive sins.
At the service of the Mass, the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation).	The Communion service is just a service to remember Jesus' death. The bread and wine stay as bread and wine.
Churches should be decorated with statues and stained glass windows.	Churches should be plain and simple with very little decoration.
Services and the Bible should be in Latin.	Services and the Bible should be in English, so people can understand them.
Priests should wear bright robes,	Priests clothes and churches should be plain.
Priests cannot marry.	Priests allowed to marry.

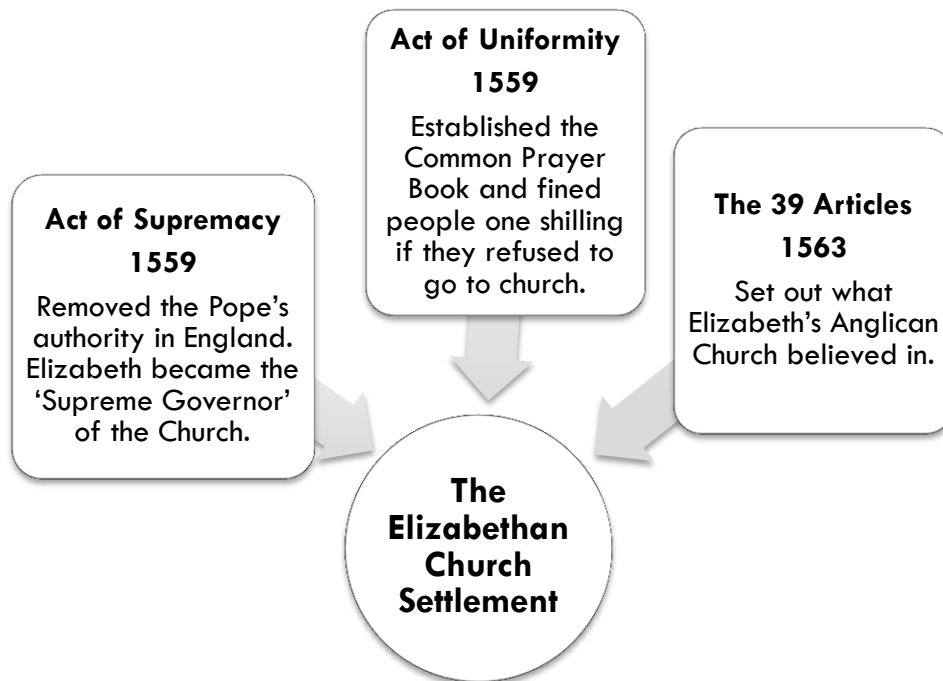
Elizabeth's Religious Beliefs

Historians have found it difficult to establish what Elizabeth's personal religious beliefs were. This was mainly because she kept her personal views private. 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.

- She liked hymns, choirs and organ music in church.
- She kept crucifixes and candles in her private chapel.
- She did not like senior clergy like Bishops to be married.
- She liked priests to wear vestments.

THE ELIZABETHAN CHURCH SETTLEMENT

Although Elizabeth was a Protestant she was prepared to compromise in order to bring the two religions together. The Elizabethan Church [The Church of England] was established as part of the Elizabethan Church settlement in 1559. Elizabeth deliberately tried to follow a 'middle way' between the two beliefs. Elizabeth was not a religious fanatic like Mary I and she wanted to avoid the religious problems caused by Mary I and Edward VI.



What pleased Catholics

She made herself Governor, not Head, of the Church.

Bishops, vestments, decorations in churches and music remained.

The Prayer Book changed the wording of the communion service slightly.

Strict Catholics only punished with a fine for not going to the Protestant Church.

What pleased Protestants

The Pope was no longer Head of the Church.

Priests who conduct Catholic services would be executed.

There was to be less decoration in the church. There were to be no relics or shrines.

The English Bible was to be read in Church and the service was in English.

Puritan opposition to the Elizabethan Church Settlement

The Puritans were Protestants who wanted to 'purify' the Catholic Church of all traces of the 'old' Catholic religion. They would not accept any church practices that were not in the Bible. Puritans were angry that bishops still ran the Church and vestments worn by the Anglican clergy. Many Puritans fled abroad during Mary I's reign, but they began returning in 1558. There were 3 kinds of Puritans:-

- **Moderate** - They accepted the 1559 Religious Settlement
- **Presbyterian** - They wanted the removal of all bishops and archbishops.
- **Separatists** – They wanted to abandon the national Church and set up their own church

Puritans were influenced by the more extreme Protestants in Europe like John Calvin in Geneva. Although many of the Puritans were happy with parts of Elizabeth's religious settlement, some were unwilling to compromise on how they practiced their faith.

Puritan opposition

In Parliament	Vestments	Prophesying
Elizabeth was probably forced into a more Protestant Church than she wanted.	Some clergy were not wearing the special vestments that Elizabeth wanted. Archbishop Parker he issued more guidelines on vestments known as the advertisements.	Puritans met for prayers and discussion about religion, often criticising Elizabeth. She wanted these meetings banned. Archbishop Grindal refused. Elizabeth suspended him.

Puritans were a threat because:-

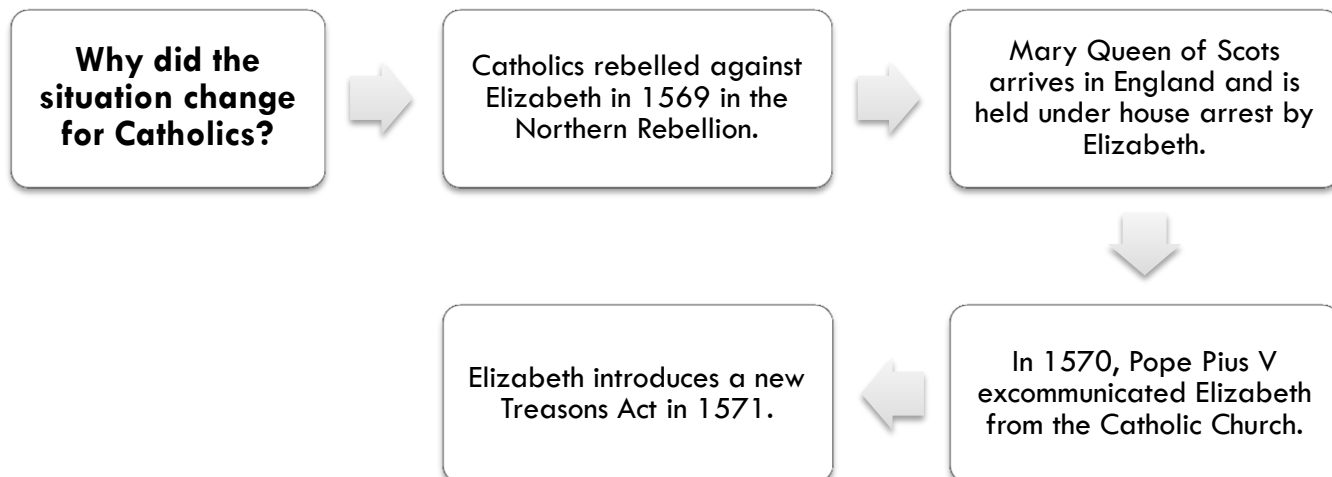
1. They had some important supporters in the government and Church like Robert Dudley and Archbishop Edmund Grindal.
2. Some Puritans challenged the structure of the Church and questioned whether Elizabeth should be Governor of the Church.
3. Puritans were printing extreme pamphlets that criticised Elizabeth's Church.

How did Elizabeth deal with Puritans?

1. Parliament was banned from discussing religious matters and imprisoned some MPs.
2. New rules banned unlicensed preaching and prophesying.
3. A Puritan called William Stubbs had his hand cut off for publishing pamphlets criticising Elizabeth.

Catholic opposition to the Elizabethan Church Settlement

There were still many Catholics in England. Catholicism remained strongest in some remote areas and their distance from London was an advantage. In the North and Northwest, the homes of the wealthy became important centres of Catholicism. Elizabeth tried to accommodate Catholic beliefs in her religious settlement so that they could go to church without feeling guilty or disloyal to their faith. However, Catholics did not have an easy time during the reign of Elizabeth. Catholicism was effectively illegal. In 1559, a 12 pence fine for refusing to go to church was created, and many Catholic clergy, judges, MPs and JPs had their positions taken away. Attendance at a Catholic mass was punished by a fine of £100, but the saying of mass, or arranging for it to be said, carried the death penalty. As far as Elizabeth was concerned, so long as Catholics kept their beliefs private, were loyal to her, and attended church now and then, they were free to believe what they wished. She often turned a blind eye to Catholics who had secret services in their home.



MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Mary was born in 1542, she became queen before she was a week old. She was the only child of James V of Scotland and his French wife, Mary of Guise. She spent her early life in France and married the French king Francis II in 1559 but he died the next year. Mary returned to Scotland in 1561. Although Catholic, at first, she accepted that Scotland now had a Protestant government. As a Catholic in a Protestant country, Mary was regarded with suspicion by some of her subjects. Things did not go well for Mary.

Mary married her cousin Henry Stuart (Lord Darnley) in 1565. Darnley had Rizzio murdered [stabbed 56 times]. He claimed Rizzio was having an affair with Mary. In 1567, Darnley's house was blown up by gunpowder, probably by the Earl of Bothwell, a close friend of Mary. Darnley was found strangled in his garden. Mary married the Earl of Bothwell. People were disgusted and the Scottish nobles forced Mary off the throne in favour of her infant son, James VI. She appealed to Elizabeth for help and support, but Elizabeth, suspicious that she was going to raise Catholic support and take the throne of England, kept Mary a virtual prisoner for the next 19 years. During this time, Mary became the focus of numerous Catholic plots to assassinate Elizabeth. As Mary was not directly involved in these plots Elizabeth was reluctant to act against her.

Catholic Plots against Elizabeth I

Ridolfi Plot 1571 They planned a Northern Catholic rebellion and an invasion by the Spanish under Philip of Spain. Elizabeth's secret service, headed by her spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham, uncovered the plot. The Duke of Norfolk was executed as a traitor in 1572.	Throckmorton Plot 1583 The Spanish ambassador was arrested carrying details of the plot and a list of Catholics involved. Throckmorton was executed but the Spanish ambassador was allowed to leave England. The Act of Association of 1585 said, Mary would be held responsible for any plot carried out in her name.	Babington Plot 1586 Walsingham allowed Mary to secretly correspond with Babington. Mary used coded letters. In one letter she agreed, "For the dispatch of the usurper." In other words, Elizabeth. The letters were used as evidence against the conspirators and Mary Queen of Scots.
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Missionary and Seminary Priests

When Elizabeth became queen, a large number of English Catholics went to live at Douai, in the Netherlands which was controlled by Philip II of Spain. Here, English Catholics were trained as missionary priests, then secretly sent back to England to hear Mass, confessions and restore the Catholic faith.

Catholic missionary priests called Jesuits were also sent to England to convert Protestants. Elizabeth was furious and ordered Catholic priests to be executed for treason. Parliament passed several laws making missionary activity of both seminary and Jesuits priests illegal. Douai ordained about 440 priests but 98 were executed for treason.