

The English Reformation

by Vivienne Ferris

Vivienne Ferris is a retired History teacher and a Voluntary Guide at Winchester Cathedral. In 2015, she gave a talk on The English Reformation to the Guides as part of their continuing education programme. As 2017 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, Viv was asked to revisit her talk and produce this article for Record Extra.

Some have likened the break with Rome to that which may be experienced when Britain leaves the European Union, and that makes it even more relevant at this moment.

What do we mean by the Reformation?

This is a question that has exercised Historians for generations. We could ask subsequent questions like, do we mean the Reformation in England? If so, was it mainly a religious movement or was it above all political? How long did it last? Did it indeed change England from Catholicism to Protestantism and if so, how far did the changes permeate society and take root in the whole geographical extent of England? The traditional view is that the Reformation was a long drawn out event, lasting from 1533 to 1603 and was orchestrated first by Henry VIII, taken over and moved more radically forward by Edward VI, experienced a blip of retrenchment under Mary, only to change again under Elizabeth, who left us with the Church of England which we can recognise today. This presupposes that all the individual happenings were linked together in a chain of cause and effect, giving coherence to the change of England from a Catholic to a Protestant country. It therefore seems to indicate that the outcome had been inevitable from the outset and displays, too much, the benefit of hindsight. More recently the view is that there were several distinct happenings in the English Reformation, which were separate but linked. It is these that I shall try to identify and explain. However, before we can understand the English Reformation, we need to cast our eyes over to Europe to understand the context of what became a seismic shift in religion.

What was the historical and religious context of the challenge to the Universal Church?

Criticisms of the Catholic Church and the Papacy were not new to the 16th Century in Europe or in England. In the 14th Century, from 1305 the French Monarchy dominated the Papacy with a French Pope, Clement V, living in the city of Avignon, just outside the French border. In 1378 two Popes were elected, one in Avignon and one in Rome, and this led to the Great Schism in the Church. Although a Council was summoned to resolve the Schism, the immediate result was to have three Popes, as the two deposed Popes would not accept their fate. The Papacy was consequently weakened and there was increasing criticism of the opulent lifestyles that the holders of the See of St Peter indulged in; they were acting more as secular princes, living in magnificent palaces subsumed by political intrigue and military enterprise. However, it was the Renaissance Popes who plumbed new depths of corruption. The Borgia Alexander VI (1492-1503) became infamous for his debauchery. His successor, Julius II (1503-13), was a warrior

Pope who led his army to victory and significantly added to the territory of the Papal States. Leo X, the first Medici Pope, put most of his time and effort into securing church money and offices for his relatives.

Who were the most influential voices of dissent?

In Bohemia, Jan Hus (1369-1415), a brilliant preacher, influenced by the teachings of John Wycliffe, argued for a Church in which popes and priests were not necessary to be an intermediary between an individual and God. He advocated a return to the simplicity of the early church and the supremacy of biblical authority over the Catholic Church. Like Wycliffe, he advocated a vernacular Bible so people could read the truth themselves. He was condemned and burnt as a heretic, an action that made him celebrated as a martyr throughout Europe and brought more criticism on the Church. His was not the only voice of dissent. In the Low Countries, France, Spain, Italy and the North German States, criticisms of corruption in the Church abounded.

One way that many of the intelligentsia could highlight the evils of the Church without censorship was to use satire. This tool was used by the man acknowledged to be the greatest scholar of his time, Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), an Augustinian priest from Holland, a Humanist and great friend of Thomas More. In biting wit and elegant Latin, Erasmus ridiculed the leaders of the Church, highlighting their abuses and follies. He emphasised the need to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek to uncover the real meaning of the early church texts and spent many years editing the works of Jerome, Augustine and others. Through his examination of these early texts, he called for a return to the early Christian values of simplicity, piety and faith. He did not, however, want to destroy the Church, but to reform it from within through education, with the support of the Pope and Christian rulers.

It was however, Martin Luther, a young Augustinian monk in the German town of Wittenberg who was responsible for the ideological earthquake that devastated the whole of Western Christendom. In 1511, already with a reputation for being forthright and unconventional, he joined the staff at the newly-founded University of Wittenberg, Saxony. It was here that he had an evangelical flash of insight when he realised from reading Paul's Epistle to the Romans that no one could justify himself or herself to God except by faith. Good works were not enough. This conversion experience coincided with a fresh initiative by Leo X to raise more money for the rebuilding of St Peter's in Rome, by a vigorous campaign for the sale of Indulgences. Seeing it as another money-grabbing scheme by the Vatican, many in the German States were ready, willing and able to support Luther's challenge to the Indulgences in 1517, when he nailed his 95 theses or propositions for public debate to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Luther became a celebrity and his 95 theses were translated from Latin into vernacular languages, printed and disseminated to anyone who could read. No longer was the debate confined to the scholars, but it became available to a mass audience who were ready to challenge the authority of the Church.

Over the next three years, as opposition from the Church increased, Luther became more stubborn and extreme. Basing his ideas on Holy Scripture, he attacked the whole basis of Western Catholic theology. He contended, in an outpouring of pamphlets and

books, that there was no sacerdotal priesthood, no miracle of the mass, no purgatory and no seven sacraments administered by the priest (he reduced them to only two; baptism and Holy Communion). These ideas became matters of public debate, the subject of alehouse gossip and those with grievances against the clergy looked on him as a champion.

The new heresy spread like wildfire and Luther was summoned by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the instigation of the Pope to the Diet of Worms to recant or face burning at the stake. Luther though stood firm, declaring "I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe". These few words illustrate the essence of what the Reformation was about. Firstly, the Bible is the supreme authority for all Christians, including the Pope. Secondly, all may read the Bible themselves and not have it interpreted by priests and bishops. Thirdly, individual conscience is to be their guide, even if that means going against Church teaching. Lastly, salvation depends on faith and not good works. Luther then went on to translate the Bible into robust modern German so ordinary Christians could base their faith on Scripture and work out for themselves whether Luther was a heretic. Bible translation was a powerful weapon for Luther but it became the opening of Pandora's box for the Papacy and Europe. With the invention of the printing press and the dissemination of Bibles, an authority older and more fundamental than the institution of the Catholic Church itself could challenge the *raison d'être* of the papacy.

But what about England?

How was this island affected by the religious earthquake taking place in Northern Europe? At the very beginning of Henry VIII's reign in 1509, there was a restlessness in society, a sense that these were changing times. For the first time in living memory there had been a peaceful transition from father to son and the 17-year-old Henry ruled by hereditary right, not by usurpation. England was at peace with its neighbours but under the surface there was dissent, not just from the underprivileged, who were conscious of injustice and the need for reform of abuses, but also there was a new critical spirit amongst the intellectual elite. The idea that a realm should be governed for the 'common weal' or 'commonwealth', the general wellbeing of all the people, was gathering momentum and was spread through the invention that revolutionised media communication – the printing press. Thomas More's *Utopia* captured the spirit of the age by exposing contemporary evils and suggesting that in his fictional, newly-discovered land, a society of liberty, equality and friendship could be achieved if the vices of cruelty, avarice and perversion of justice were eradicated. So, although England was at peace, there was a sense of unease, society was divided. The rural poor were suffering the effects of increasing numbers of enclosures and generally the underclass resented the excesses of the system of cruel and excessive punishments for minor crimes. In the cities, especially in overpopulated and plague-ridden London, mob rule challenged authority. There was unemployment, inflation, trade dislocation and disparities of wealth. The feeling of doom as the new century started was reflected in the apocalyptic art of Bosch, Dürer and Holbein as it was in the preaching of itinerant friars whose colourful oratory had an immediate impact. Consequently it was both the uneducated frequenters of taverns as well as the educated who challenged accepted

orthodoxy. The intellectual climate Erasmus discovered in England was where “outworn, commonplace” learning had been abandoned.

What was the state of the Church in England at the opening of Henry VIII’s reign?

There were very few Englishmen and women who would have owned up to disbelief, but there was a dissenting minority of people who declared their dissatisfaction with the clergy and the Church. They were resentful of ‘Benefit of Clergy’ and the existence of Church Courts, where lesser punishments for crimes were handed out than laymen would have received. They complained about the excessive money demanded in tithes and mortuary fees, especially when the priests were seen as not carrying out their duties, were ignorant and displayed many moral shortcomings. They criticised the practice of pluralism and absenteeism, of simony and sinecures. The Monasteries were also increasingly unpopular. The numbers of religious houses had never recovered from the devastation of the Black Death, dropping from about 1,000 to 900 and the numbers of monks and nuns from 17,500 in 1348 to 12,000 in 1500. But the monasteries still owned vast tracts of land and were awash with money, leading to the relaxation of previous austerity in the life style of their members. Townspeople’s dissatisfaction with their monasteries led to open violence as happened in Sherborne and Tavistock in the early years of the 16th Century. Fewer people were attracted to the monastic way of life and some preferred to live a disciplined life outside the cloister as did Henry VII’s mother, Margaret Beaufort. Those who wanted to follow their own devotions increasingly needed a vernacular Bible. This, however, had been forbidden in England since 1408, after Wycliffe’s translations were disseminated and after the emergence of the Lollards, a lay movement which threatened the authority of the clergy.

The picture, however, was not all black. There were reforming bishops, using the newly-invented printing press to raise the educational standard of the clergy. Books of instruction were increasingly in the vernacular. Many rich people still wanted to show devotion by paying for huge new churches, for example the cloth merchants in East Anglia, the Cotswolds and Somerset. Many wanted to avoid the strictures of purgatory after their death and used these gifts as indulgences. Furthermore, pilgrimages were still popular.

It was onto this scene that the confident, indulged and devout Henry VIII appeared. He firmly believed that he had been singled out for divine favour and regarded himself as a bit of a theologian. He had an extensive library and he kept himself abreast of the latest developments in the intellectual world. He admired Erasmus and followed the Luther debate with keen interest, especially as he was broadly in favour of the reform movement. But when it became obvious that Luther went much further than the intellectual scepticism of Erasmus, Henry was genuinely shocked by the radical theology coming out of Saxony. Wolsey organised a burning of heretical books and Henry decided he would personally enter the literary battle by writing “*Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*” (Defence of the Seven Sacraments). He supported transubstantiation and masses for the dead, rejecting Luther’s central tenet that only faith was necessary for salvation. Henry’s motives, though, were not solely to defend the truth. He also was engaging in a public-relations exercise, promoting his image of orthodoxy, especially

with the Pope. He asked for a title and was granted by Leo X that of 'Defender of the Faith'.

How secure were relations between Church and State?

Superficially, it appeared that relations between the state and the church were secure, but below the surface there were signs of stress. The fact that Wolsey had to organise a burning of Lutheran books as early as 1521 shows that there were large numbers of them circulating in the capital. Merchants thought it worth their while to brave the opposition of the bishops to bring such explosive literature into the country. Members of the intellectual elite at Oxford and especially Cambridge were interested in the latest theological debate and many were won over by the idea of justifying by faith, such as Stephen Gardiner and Miles Coverdale and even the arch-conservative Hugh Latimer. These early evangelicals (as supporters of the reformed teaching were being called) were not revolutionaries, wanting to demolish English Catholicism but they drew radical, logical conclusions from their reading. Furthermore the new English translation of the Bible by William Tyndale (c1494 -1536) had a momentous impact on all those who were unorthodox, sceptical and dissatisfied with the status quo both in intellectual centres and in the tavern.

What was the impact of William Tyndale's Bible?

Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English can be seen as a starting point of the English Reformation. Spurned by the religious establishment, Tyndale was supported by a group of passionately dedicated, Bible-based, evangelical businessmen from the City called the Christian Brethren. It was they who smuggled reformist books from the continent, promoting evangelical propaganda and it was they who were prepared to give Tyndale, an extremely gifted scholar of Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, financial aid to translate the Bible. They also in 1524, when he had virtually finished the New Testament, financed a journey to Wittenberg for Tyndale to meet Luther and, hopefully, to find printers who would risk setting the text and be able to evade detection by the authorities. It was eventually in the city of Worms that 6,000 copies were printed, bound and sent to England, although most of these were bought up by the Bishop of London and burnt on the steps of St Paul's.

Tyndale and his supporters believed that God's truth had been hidden from the people for centuries but now it could be revealed to anyone who could read the Bible or have it read to them. The Church, however, held that Scripture was a mystery, which only the priesthood should have access to, so they could expound it to the laity. It was this argument which became, within only a few months, the central core of the English Reformation. The lines were drawn; one was either for the Bible or the Church and the debate became increasingly vitriolic with opposition to Tyndale being led by Thomas More, the great heretic hunter. The second edition of Tyndale's Bible came out in 1526 and was even more influenced by Luther's teaching of salvation by faith and his identifying of the Pope as an Antichrist. But even by this date, the fragmentation of the continental Protestant reform movement began to be mirrored in London and the arguments became increasingly extreme, especially on the matter of the miracle of the Mass. Did the bread and wine change at the consecration to become the body and

blood of Christ or were the bread and wine merely powerful symbols which were a reminder of Christ's sacrifice of Calvary?

How did this widening theological debate have an impact on the political situation of the time?

Henry had become increasingly preoccupied with the matter of the succession. In seventeen years of marriage, Catherine of Aragon had not provided a surviving male heir, only a daughter, Mary. By 1525 it was clear that Catherine could no longer conceive. There were rumours of divorce in the air, although Henry seemed to be hedging his bets by seemingly preparing his illegitimate son, born 1519, whom he had created Duke of Richmond and the premier peer of the realm, to become heir-apparent. What changed matters was Henry becoming besotted with Anne Boleyn, 15 years his junior. She refused to become his mistress; she would only become his wife. As his infatuation deepened, he became increasingly doubtful about the validity of his marriage to Catherine. Catherine had previously been married to Henry's older brother, Arthur, but had become a widow after only five months of adolescent married life. Henry, prided himself on his biblical scholarship and believed God was punishing him for marrying his brother's wife as it says in Leviticus (Chapter 20 verse 15) "*If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an impurity: they shall be childless*". Although Pope Julius II had granted a dispensation from canon law for Henry's marriage to Catherine, as it was within the prohibited degrees, Henry conveniently convinced himself that his marriage was explicitly against God's commandment and thus it was morally defensible to end it and remarry. He went to great lengths to convince others that he meant what he said and that he was not engaged in a propaganda exercise. Once the decision was made to seek a divorce, Henry expected the action to be straightforward, especially as Wolsey, his leading minister had assured him of this. The Pope only needed to declare the original dispensation invalid and thus the supposed marriage would be annulled. Such annulments were commonplace, for a fee! Henry's own sister, Margaret, Queen of Scotland had received Clement VII's permission to divorce her second husband in 1527, but Henry's luck was out.

Clement VII was in no position to grant Henry's request because Rome had been sacked by Imperial troops when the Pope had supported the wrong side in the never-ending struggle for control of Italy between France and the Holy Roman Empire. Clement was virtually a prisoner and he could not afford to upset the Emperor Charles V, Catherine's nephew, as Habsburg family pride was at stake. The King's Great Matter dragged on through 1528 into 1529, despite the presence of the papal envoy, Cardinal Campeggio. He was a friend of Wolsey's who, like the Pope, used every delaying tactic. Wolsey was blamed for the lack of progress and he was arrested. There followed two aimless years of inaction, during which nothing stopped the spread of Evangelicalism. More people throughout the country converted to the new learning and there was a growth of anti-clericalism. Then, Thomas Cromwell, a close advisor of Wolsey's, ended the stalemate. Sometime in 1531 he suggested that if the Pope wouldn't grant the divorce then the power to do so should be given to Parliament.

Parliament was to be used to pass laws restricting papal powers by recognising that these powers resided in the Crown of England and setting out punishments for those

who opposed the new arrangements. The idea of using parliament to bring about a revolution in the relationship between Church and State was highly innovative and shrewd as it ensured that the representatives of the landed and merchant classes, upon whom the king depended to exercise his authority, would be totally involved in implementing any new laws.

Even before the divorce was granted, the power of the Church in England had been diminishing. In 1531 the clergy were forced to pay a fine for endorsing papal appointments like Wolsey's and for exercising their spiritual jurisdiction in church courts. In 1532, Cromwell introduced a petition known as the Supplication against the Ordinaries in Parliament. This was directed against Church courts and clerical jurisdictions. Further legislation was passed which surrendered the legislative independence of the church to the Crown (Submission of the Clergy). Thomas More resigned as Chancellor as a consequence of this as he could not reconcile his loyalty to the Crown with loyalty to the Church. The Church in England was now effectively under Henry's control and this was the turning point of the political Reformation.

Before Henry could instigate his supremacy over the Church, he had to sever links with Rome, so there was no chance of Catherine appealing to the Pope. This was done by the Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates (payments by bishops when they took up their posts - 1/3 of a year's income). This challenged the economic aspect of papal power but also papal rights of consecration. The Act allowed bishops to be consecrated in England if the Pope refused, as a result of annates being abolished. Many traditional bishops voted against the legislation and Henry was not quite ready to assert Royal Supremacy over the Pope. However, the idea of Supremacy appealed to his enormous ego and it became increasingly clear to Cromwell that it was the only answer to the Great Matter.

In 1533 the Act of Restraint of Appeals was passed. This declared that the final authority in all legal matters, lay and clerical, resided with the King. It was therefore illegal to appeal to any authority outside the kingdom on these matters. No longer could the Pope decide on the validity of Henry and Catherine's marriage.

When the obstructive William Wareham died in 1532, the more sympathetic Thomas Cranmer was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Stephen Gardiner had high hopes for the job but had opposed the Submission of the Clergy. The scene was therefore set for the King's Great Matter to be resolved speedily and with the desired outcome, especially as by January 1533 Anne Boleyn was pregnant, having succumbed to Henry's advances with the full expectation of a speedy divorce. A secret marriage ceremony was performed and a hearing of the case on the validity of the marriage to Catherine was held in late May. It was announced that the papal dispensation for Henry's marriage to Catherine was invalid and therefore they had never been legally married. The secret marriage with Anne was therefore legal as Henry was a bachelor at the time. It seems likely, however, that even without the pregnancy, the legislation and actions of 1532 and 1533 would have occurred anyway.

The Act of Succession of 1534 registered the invalidity of Henry's marriage to Catherine and the validity of his marriage to Anne. The heirs of the second marriage were

legitimised and Mary was bastardised. The nation was to be bound by an oath swearing allegiance to the new Queen and her offspring and it was made a treasonable offence to speak maliciously against the second marriage. The Pope responded by reaffirming the validity of Henry's marriage to Catherine and Henry reacted by having the Pope's name struck out of all prayer books. The Act of Supremacy of 1534 declared the King Supreme Head of the Church of England, and gave him complete administrative and legislative control over the Church. This was enforced by a Treason Act, which made it a capital offence to slander the Supremacy or deny the King's new title. Cromwell thus had the instrument of terror to use against opponents of the new order.

There was no great resistance to change apart from a few high profile opponents (John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, executed 1535 and Thomas More). The oaths made by all adult males to the succession and all the clergy to Royal Supremacy were reinforced by using the printing press and the pulpit to convince the nation of the legality of Henry's Reformation.

How did the English Reformation proceed?

The next step in England's severance with Rome came with the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1509 there were more than 850 religious houses in England and Wales and their wealth was enormous. They possessed most of the Church's riches and about 30% of the country's landed property. Money also came from bequests to say prayers for the soul to shorten time in Purgatory. Henry needed their money to fund his foreign policy and wars. The monasteries were also potentially a source of opposition to his religious reforms because they owed allegiance to parent institutions abroad. Henry saw he could buy support for his religious and political changes by selling off church lands. Thomas Cromwell was given the responsibility of carrying out the dissolution. He was appointed the king's Vicegerent in spiritual matters in 1534. The following year he commissioned a survey of all ecclesiastical property and wealth in England called the **Valor Ecclesiasticus**. It showed that the income of the religious houses was over £160,000, three times that of the royal estates. Westminster Abbey was the richest with an income of £3,912. He also ordered visitations, which were carried out that same year. A series of questions was to be asked by Cromwell's trusted and unscrupulous employees, Thomas Legh and Richard Leyton, who also recorded the shortcomings of their lives admitted by monks and nuns. There were many complaints about their bullying tactics in getting the answers Cromwell wanted.

In March 1536 an act dissolving all religious smaller houses was passed. These smaller houses were seen as 'dens of vice and places of manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living'. Their property was to go to the king but a pension was offered to heads of houses. 300 houses were identified for closing and Commissioners were appointed to each county to implement the closures. This had to be done quickly to stop the monasteries' wealth disappearing before it could be seized for the crown. Valuables, lead, gold, silver and bronze from bells, were sent to the Tower of London. Saleable items were auctioned locally and anything left was stripped by those who couldn't afford to buy. Especially in the North and Lincolnshire there was little approval of what was happening and a serious rebellion broke out called The Pilgrimage of Grace. This was brutally put down by 1537 and the government decided to close all

remaining monasteries. Henry's vengeance on those implicated in the rebellion was fierce. The heads of these houses were declared traitors and executed in their own monasteries and all their possessions were handed over to the King. Vengeance was also taken on the leading Yorkist Pole family after Cardinal Pole was ordered by the Pope to organise an invasion. Although the rebellion was over before Pole could act, his mother, the elderly matriarch the Countess of Salisbury, and other senior members of the family were executed. After the failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace, other heads of monasteries surrendered freely.

Hundreds of houses were left, especially in the south, including the richest and most famous in the country. In 1538 Cromwell sent out more royal commissioners to invite heads of houses to surrender their property to the king freely. Many of the heads of houses, who initially resisted the invitation, were willing to resign when told to. More amenable men and women quickly replaced them. In 1539 an act ratifying the legality of the voluntary surrenders was passed. Parliament was presented with a 'fait accompli' as most of the larger houses were dissolved already. In November 1539, all remaining religious houses were suppressed although in six new dioceses monastic churches became cathedrals and others were converted from a monastery to a cathedral.

The Court of Augmentations was set up to sell the land confiscated, making the king very rich; an estimated one and a half million pounds was frittered away on paying for Henry's wars.

How Protestant was England?

Despite the changes that took place in Henry's reign, in 1547 England was not irreversibly committed to religious change. Henry was genuinely interested in theology but more as an intellectual exercise. He did, however, have religious prejudices which were conservative, such as his belief that vows of chastity should be lifelong, even for monks who had been thrown out of their monasteries. He also wouldn't accept that lay people should take communion in both kinds. He believed that good works as well as faith were necessary for salvation and he maintained with total conviction that purgatory existed for the cleansing of souls before entry to heaven. He also believed in the validity of transubstantiation and the benefits of confession to a priest.

He saw the Church as a pawn in the game of power politics to increase his power at home and further his designs abroad. So expediency rather than principle governed the decisions he made about the Church. This can be seen in his moves towards Protestant beliefs in 1537-8 in an effort to win German Lutheran support, as were the preparations for the suppression of chantries made in the final years of his life. Although Henry believed in the theology which underpinned them, their wealth was a great temptation. The reprieve which Henry's death brought was short-lived as they were swept away in the early months of Edward VI's reign.

In 1537 Cromwell ensured a more obvious step towards Protestantism in ordering every parish to possess a copy of the Bible in English within two years and it had to be easily accessible for parishioners to read. What was virtually a military campaign was conducted to make sure there were enough Bibles available, making this achievement

one of the most significant developments of the English Reformation. Cromwell's Bible was a translation by Miles Coverdale, based on much of Tyndale's work.

In 1538 it was clear from reports by Cromwell's agents that the extent and nature of people's reliance on shrines and holy images was widespread and if biblical truth was to be established in people's minds then these holy things had to disappear. Injunctions were issued to the clergy to remove relics of saints and to discourage pilgrimages. This included the removal of Becket's tomb at Canterbury Cathedral. Henry was particularly in favour of this as Becket's defiance of a king in the name of the Church was not a message he agreed with. High on the list of pilgrimage centres, by 1538 Becket's tomb was laden with an enormous amount of precious votive offerings. Its dismantling gave the royal treasury two enormous chests of jewels and 24 wagonloads of plate. Cromwell was happy to dispel the Becket myth and burn the bones of the saint. In November, the King followed this by ordering all images of Becket in all churches to be destroyed.

St Swithun's shrine suffered the same fate in 1538. All over the country, familiar objects of devotion were torn down, some by government order, some by spontaneous iconoclasm. Cromwell knew that the disappearance of such 'holy things' was important if biblical truth was to be established in people's minds. An image-based religion was being replaced by a word-based religion, not always peacefully, as zealots supporting the Bible vandalised churches and supporters of the old ways refused to allow the Great Bible into their churches.

Henry also decided to settle doctrinal and liturgical matters himself. In 1536 Henry ordered his bishops to reach a workable compromise between the increasingly vociferous reformists and the traditionalists. The resulting Ten Articles was a hotchpotch. The first five articles were more Lutheran and the seven sacraments were cut down to three. Confessions continued as did purgatory but adoration of images was forbidden. These Ten Articles were to be preached by parish clergy but if they were supposed to settle religious conflict, they failed. Many people in the countryside were persuaded that the unwelcome changes were Lutheran and there was much anti-government feeling against Cromwell's over-zealous agents. The Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536 was the most dangerous expression of reaction in the North, especially against the religious changes and whilst mopping up the last pockets of northern resistance Henry decided once again to try to resolve the two extremes of the religious divide and give priests a fuller explanation of what was to be believed and practised. He instructed his Vicegerent, Cromwell, to convene a committee of bishops and senior clergy to draw up a manual which would hopefully unite all of his subjects. Other state churches, like the Lutherans, which had embraced reform, had also found it necessary to define in what ways they were distinct from Rome. The Bishop's Book or The Institution of a Christian Man of 1537 was the outcome. It was a compromise document but leant towards an evangelical rather than traditionalist view. It did not set out Anglican Theology and Henry did not give permission for it to be printed on the king's authority as he claimed he needed to read it properly. He made it clear that only he was the fountainhead of religious truth. Whatever he approved of was orthodox. Radical extremists and supporters of papal authority were equally in error.

With nothing decided, and Cromwell dragging his heels, the conservative element at court took the initiative. Stephen Gardiner, supported by the Duke of Norfolk, led a campaign for an act which would define some major points of doctrine and practice. The Act of the Six Articles was a triumph of conservatism. It affirmed transubstantiation, clerical celibacy, confession, private masses and communion in one kind for the laity. The punishments to be meted out to those who did not follow them included burning, loss of property and imprisonment. This act was passed to assure those who were alarmed at the drift towards protestant beliefs and practices. Also, it showed a deep rift at court between Gardiner and Norfolk on one side and the reformers Cromwell and Cranmer on the other. Henry himself was erratic and impulsive over his religious views but rejected the idea that he had to be either a Catholic or Protestant. He believed that loyal subjects, whether conservative supporters of the old religious traditions or reformers, supporters of biblical authority, should leave their king to decide on religious issues, even though he was well aware of the enormous gap between the two groups. He punished those who held extreme opinions and supported the moderates in order to prevent armed insurrection. It was very clear that Henry was determined to be the sole arbiter of religious belief.

The Reformers lost out with the fall of Cromwell in 1540 following the debacle of Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves and the conservatives were in the ascendant after Henry married Katherine Howard, the Duke of Norfolk's granddaughter. Even after Katherine's execution, the conservatives, led by Stephen Gardiner, started a major campaign. He wanted to destroy as many of the evangelicals as he could, especially Cranmer, even going as far as to try to implicate him in heretical teaching.

The background to this was the formulation of official doctrine to replace the Bishop's Book, which was always thought of as an interim statement of doctrine for the English Church. Henry was closely involved with its preparation, wanting to ensure the eradication of Lutheran ideas which had crept into the Bishop's Book. The King's Book of May 1543 struck at the heart of the Reformation by denying that justification was by faith alone and that good works played a part too. It also supported transubstantiation. The King's Book was a severe blow for the reformers but at least every point of doctrine was based on scriptural authority and not on unsupported traditional teaching.

The next piece of regressive legislation concerned the English Bible. The conservatives believed that not everyone was capable of interpreting it correctly. So The Act for the Advancement of True Religion forbade any man or woman below the rank of yeoman to read the Great Bible either publically or at home. Noblemen and gentlemen were only allowed to study it quietly at home with their households. This was supposed to stamp out religious enthusiasm. It failed, despite an inquisition prevalent in London in particular. Gardiner continued in his campaign against Cranmer, gathering evidence which he presented to the King. But Henry was not prepared to act on it and made clear his support of his Archbishop, especially when details of a plot, engineered by Gardiner and his secretary, his nephew, were known. Gardiner nearly followed his nephew to Tyburn but was saved by persuading Henry of his loyalty.

Henry's refusal to destroy Cranmer or Gardiner shows the apparent contradiction in the Henrician Reformation. Church doctrine was clearly established in law and if this law

had been rigidly enforced, England would have been an orthodox Catholic country without the Pope. Heretics were rounded up and punished and evangelical books banned. But unlike the Inquisition on the continent, Henry kept a close rein on persecution. The Act of the Six Articles and the King's Book were not rigorously enforced and Henry continued to protect prominent evangelicals, even going as far as to entrust the education of his son in the hands of the supporters of the new learning and that kept the reform movement alive.

What had Henry's Reformation achieved?

The Pope was abrogated, monasteries were dissolved, pilgrimages and shrines (e.g. Becket's) were abolished, the English Bible was introduced, Church resources were pillaged for the state and the laity, and the monarch became Head of the Church. As to the progress of Protestantism, that was much less strong than historians used to think. By 1547, the geographical extent of Protestantism was 30%-40% in London, 15% in the south-east region and in the provincial towns, around 10% in the Midlands outside the towns, and in the north and south-west region almost nil.

What was still Catholic?

- The Eucharist was still defined in the Catholic form of Transubstantiation.
- Only the clergy were allowed to take communion in both bread and wine.
- The Catholic rites of confirmation, marriage, holy orders and extreme unction were reintroduced along with the old sacraments of the Eucharist, penance and baptism.
- The laity still had to make regular confession to a priest.
- English clergy no longer could marry and those who had married before 1540 had to send away their wives and families, including Cranmer.
- The laity once again had to do 'good works' for their salvation although there was no specific reference to the existence of Purgatory.
- The singing of masses for the souls of the dead was seen to be agreeable and was a reason Chantries were not closed at the same time as monasteries were dissolved.
- Paintings and statues of the saints were still allowed in churches but the laity were told not actually to worship them.
- Many processions and rituals were maintained because it was claimed that they created a good religious frame of mind among the congregations.

What was Protestant?

- Services were still conducted in Latin but Cranmer's English Litany was authorised in 1545.
- Greater importance was attached to the sermon and the Lord's Prayer.
- The Creed and Ten Commandments had to be taught in English by parents to children and servants.
- The elite laity were allowed to read The Great Bible in their own homes.
- Pilgrimages and the offering of gifts to the shrines of saints were forbidden.

- The number of Holy Days – days like Sunday when the laity were expected to go to church and not work had been reduced to 25.
- No Monasteries existed after 1539.

Attempts, between 1534 and 1547, to establish a uniform set of articles of faith for the Church of England had only produced a patchwork of doctrines that often conflicted and which were held together by Henry's Treason and Heresy laws. Anyone who questioned or broke the statutes and proclamations defining the doctrines of the Church of England was liable to confiscation of property, fines, imprisonment or execution. The censorship laws prevented the printing, publishing, or importation of books and pamphlets expressing views contrary to the doctrines of the Church of England.

Less than a year before the king died, the reformer Bishop Hooper observed gloomily,

“Our king has destroyed the Pope, but not popery; he has expelled the monks and nuns, and pulled down their monasteries; he has caused all their possessions to be transferred into his exchequer..... The impious mass, the most shameful celibacy of the clergy, the invocation of saints, auricular confession, superstitious abstinence from meats, and purgatory, were never before held by the people in greater esteem than at the present moment”.

However, the rivalry at court after the fall of Cromwell between the reformers, led by Cranmer and Edward Seymour, later Duke of Somerset, and conservatives, led by Gardiner and the Duke of Norfolk was ended when the reformers gained the upper hand in 1546. Henry had married Catherine Parr, a committed Protestant, the Duke of Norfolk was arrested on a charge of treason and Stephen Gardiner was dismissed from the Privy Council.

Before Henry died in January 1547, conscious of the danger of leaving a minor as his heir, he had made a final settlement of the succession in his Will. This replaced the earlier Succession Acts of 1534, 1536 and 1544. If Edward were to die without an heir, the succession was to pass first to Mary and then to Elizabeth. If they were all to die without heirs, then the succession would pass to Frances Grey, the daughter of his youngest sister Mary, who married the Duke of Suffolk. This excluded the other possible claimant, Mary Queen of Scots, the granddaughter of his elder sister Margaret.

The other main concern Henry had was to prevent a power struggle on his death. He set up a Privy Council of 16 of his trusted advisors, trying to balance the membership equally between reformers and conservatives. They were to have equal powers and govern until Edward reached 18 years. With the arrest of Norfolk and the expulsion of Gardiner, however, the Protestant party were in firm control and Edward Seymour, brother of Jane, emerged as the leader. He was made Lord Protector and created Duke of Somerset, thus being the undisputed ruler of the country.

How did the Reformation progress under Edward VI?

The formal education of the young Edward VI was dominated by tutors who were very much advocates of European Protestant ideas, one of them even being a staunch

Calvinist. Somerset was also a supporter of religious reform, so it is not surprising that England became more recognisably Protestant in the reign of Edward VI.

Somerset, however, had to tread a careful path between keeping the support of the Protestant activists without provoking the Catholics into open revolt. However, with the return of evangelical exiles from the continent, impatient reformers seized the initiative and went on an iconoclastic rampage. They pulled down rood screens and conducted a campaign against idolatry by removing images. Official 'visitors' were then appointed and were told to enforce the removal of all venerated objects which detracted from the worship of God. This meant that shrines, candlesticks, pictures, paintings and sites of pilgrimage had to be destroyed, "so there was no memory of the same in walls, glass windows or elsewhere in the churches". With the repeal of the old heresy laws and the 1539 Act of the Six Articles, people were allowed to discuss religion freely, without fear of arrest. Censorship on printing and publishing was ended and so the circulation of religious books and pamphlets as well as the importation of Lutheran and Calvinist literature was allowed. In December 1547 an Act was passed for the dissolution of the Chantries and with it the idea of prayers for the dead. Although contemplated by Henry before he died, it was decided not to dismantle such a major pillar of popular religion. This legislation, however, was a clear indication that England had been transformed from a Catholic to a Protestant country.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, continued the process by issuing model sermons for priests who couldn't preach for themselves, and included the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. Critics who refused to conform, like Stephen Gardiner and Edward Bonner, Bishop of London, were imprisoned. In July, this was followed by an injunction stating that all services were to be conducted in English. The Sacraments were defined as communion, baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial. Bread and wine, in the communion service, could be taken by the laity and clergy were once again allowed to marry. There was, however, no clear statement on Purgatory and the worship of saints was only discouraged. Cranmer produced the first Prayer Book in English, the Book of Common Prayer, enforced by the Act of Uniformity in 1549. This was a mixture of Lutheran and Catholic beliefs in which the communion service followed the order of the Latin Mass, the clergy were expected to wear vestments and, most importantly, there was no change to the belief of transubstantiation, something which angered the more radical reformers.

Despite Somerset's cautious approach, there was opposition to the religious changes and rebellion broke out in the West Country. In the rest of England, however, protest lacked organisation and most parishes seem to have been compliant. Nevertheless, Somerset fell from power because of his inability to deal with the rebellions and was replaced by John Dudley, later to become the Duke of Northumberland. It was under Dudley that religious reforms became more radical.

Stephen Gardiner became one of the first victims of the new policy. Still imprisoned in the Tower, he refused when ordered by the Privy Council to agree to the doctrines of the Church of England. He was sentenced to stricter terms of confinement and was deprived of his bishopric in February 1551, as was Bonner of London. Over the next year, reformers were appointed to the sees of Rochester, Chichester, Norwich, Exeter

and Durham. The Catholic laity were deprived of their main spiritual leaders and were unable to offer much opposition. The Sees of London and Winchester were combined and Northumberland took possession of the temporal lands of the bishops, bringing in an estimated £1 million for the Crown.

The new Bishop of London, Ridley, initiated a more radical programme of Protestantism by replacing altars with communion tables, in line with Calvinist teaching. The form of ordination of priests became more Lutheran. priests administered the sacraments and preached the Gospel, rather than offering 'sacrifice' and mass for the living and dead. Thus the 'superstitious' idea of Purgatory was removed. Ceremonial vestments, however, still were worn during services.

In 1552 Parliament passed a series of reform measures, including a new Treason Act to enforce doctrinal uniformity and make it an offence to question the royal supremacy or any articles of faith of the English Church. A second Act of Uniformity was passed which made it an offence for clergy or laity not to attend Church of England services. Cranmer compiled a new Book of Common Prayer based upon the Scriptures and which eradicated all traces of Catholicism and the Mass. The Eucharist was clearly defined in terms of consubstantiation where the bread and wine were unchanged but there was a real presence of Christ in the heart of a true believer. Some reformers did not think that Cranmer went far enough towards the Calvinistic idea that communion was solely commemorative of the Last Supper and they saw kneeling to receive communion as idolatrous.

The death of Edward VI in 1553 brought this phase of the Reformation to an abrupt end. The Edwardian Reformation had resulted in a thoroughly protestant Church of England but the political and administrative structure of the Church remained. Furthermore, Protestantism was not firmly embraced amongst all the people of England. The landed élites and those in government circles were in favour of moderate Protestantism but were willing to conform under Mary. Many of the lower clergy and most of the ordinary people seem to have been largely indifferent to the religious debate. It was only in London, the Home Counties and in East Anglia that there appears to have been enthusiasm for Protestantism. Despite this lukewarm acceptance, Protestantism proved to be more difficult to stamp out than Mary had expected.

What were Mary's aims for the Church in England?

Mary had been brought up a strict Catholic and her zeal remained undiminished during Edward's reign. She was determined to restore Catholicism, return to papal supremacy and enforce Catholic doctrine, including transubstantiation. She believed that her accession, despite Northumberland's plot of using Lady Jane Grey to prevent it, was God's sign that she was to defeat the Protestant heresy and save England. She mistakenly believed that the popular support at her accession demonstrated that the people were eager to return to the 'True Religion'. In fact it was more a respect for the legitimate succession. Her main supporters abroad, Charles V and Pope Julius II, urged caution. Even Stephen Gardiner, who resisted Edward's reforms, did not want to return to what he thought was interfering foreign papal authority.

What did Mary do to restore Catholicism?

Firstly, Cranmer, Hooper and Ridley, along with other leading Protestant bishops were imprisoned and soon replaced by committed Catholics. Then the First Statute of Repeal (1553) began the process of removing every trace of Protestantism by sweeping away all Edwardian religious legislation. The Church was restored to its position under the Act of the Six Articles. In 1554 the bishops started the process of restoring the Latin Mass and forcing married clergy to give up their wives. Gardiner failed though to abolish the Royal Supremacy and re-introduce the heresy laws at this stage.

Gardiner also initially opposed Mary's decision to marry Philip of Spain, as did many in the country. The subsequent failed rebellion, which hoped to replace Mary with Elizabeth, slowed the pace of religious change for a short time. With the arrival of Cardinal Pole in November 1554 and the loss of Gardiner's restraining hand, following his death in November 1555, the pace quickened again.

The Second Statute of Repeal ended the Royal Supremacy and repealed all Henry's religious legislation, thus returning England to the same position it was before the break with Rome. Mary had to compromise, however, over her aim to restore the monasteries. She had to accept the authority of Parliament over religious matters. All those who had bought church lands since 1536 could keep them. She was only able to return monastic lands still held by the crown. The old Heresy Laws were restored and this led to the burning at the stake of Cranmer, Hooper, Latimer and Ridley between February 1555 and March 1556. The level of persecution increased with the appointment of Pole as Archbishop of Canterbury. Both he and Mary believed it was their sacred duty to stamp out heresy. An estimated 274 executions were carried out in the last three years of Mary's reign and far exceeded the number recorded in any other Catholic country on the Continent.

How successful were Mary's policies?

Mary's initial popularity waned as revulsion against the persecutions spread. Catholicism became firmly linked with dislike of Spain and Rome. The number of Protestants fleeing abroad to join the colonies of exiles living in centres of Lutheranism and Calvinism increased. They began to flood England with anti-Catholic books and pamphlets. The effectiveness of this campaign was displayed when, in 1558, the Privy Council ordered the death penalty by martial law for anyone found with heretical or seditious literature. If before 1555 the English were undecided about religion, the Marian persecution succeeded in creating a committed core of English Protestants.

Although Pole failed to eradicate Protestantism, he did set about a programme of improving the standard of education of the English clergy. A similar programme had been adopted on the continent as part of the Counter Reformation and had succeeded in winning back many converts. Despite the appointment of active and capable bishops and the establishing of seminaries in every diocese, however, the majority of clergy remained uneducated and lacked evangelical enthusiasm to have any immediate effect on the laity. Pole's attempts to reconcile the Church of England were not helped when, in 1555, Pope Julius III died and was succeeded by Paul IV who hated the Spanish

Habsburgs and disliked Pole so much that he stripped him of his title of Legate and recalled him to Rome. Pole refused to comply and continued his work in England as Archbishop of Canterbury. The blatant papal interference did nothing to persuade anyone of the wisdom of returning to Rome.

What was the state of religion in 1558?

Despite being able to trace the changing pattern of official doctrine through Parliamentary statutes, it is more difficult to determine what the general public thought about religion. Historians suggest the ruling élite accepted the principle of royal supremacy and conformed to whatever form of religion was favoured by the monarch. Only seven of Edward's bishops were deprived of their livings by 1554 and only 800 members of the lower clergy were ejected from their benefices, largely because they were married. Many of them retrieved their livings by ending their marriages. Despite the lower orders having an affection for traditional forms of worship, they were prepared to follow the lead of their masters who had to put the religious legislation into effect. Generally, it appears that the mass of the population did not have strong formalised convictions and neither religion had a strong hold when Mary died. When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 the country was willing to return to a moderate form of Protestantism. Mary's policy of persecution, along with her unpopular marriage to Philip of Spain, helped ensure that Catholicism would be considered alien. However, during her reign, deeper religious divisions began to appear, and the unity of the Church of England came to an end.

What were Elizabeth's religious beliefs?

Elizabeth's education and upbringing had been Protestant. Matthew Parker, who had been chosen by Anne Boleyn, had undertaken her religious education. He later became Elizabeth's first Archbishop of Canterbury. In her formative years she had been cared for by Catherine Parr, an enthusiastic Protestant who herself had been educated by the prominent Cambridge reformer, Roger Ascham. Elizabeth's own Protestant beliefs are indicated by her book of private devotions, her attitude to 'popish influences' such as candles and images of saints and her refusal to allow the elevation of the Host at mass.

What issues affected Elizabeth's religious policy?

Elizabeth was an astute politician and she wanted to avoid the mistakes of Edward and Mary's reign; Edward's attempts to enforce Protestantism led to rebellion in 1549 and Mary's persecution of Protestants had made martyrs out of the victims. She did not want to foment religious strife in England without considering national concerns. Furthermore, any reforming legislation had to be passed by Parliament; the Commons was largely Protestant but the Lords was dominated by Catholics, including Mary's bishops.

Elizabeth also had to consider the impact of any religious changes on the international scene. Spain was hostile towards the idea of a Protestant England but at that moment needed the English alliance to maintain its diplomatic position in Europe and so was prepared to accept moderate reform. Elizabeth also needed to avoid antagonising the

French because of the delicate peace negotiations taking place, which might yield the return of Calais. She also feared excommunication by the Pope, which would lead to the launch of a Crusade against England and release her subjects from obedience to her. Elizabeth could not even rely on support from Protestant countries; the Netherlands was under Spanish Control and an invasion could be launched from its ports. Scotland, with its increasingly Presbyterian population, could not be relied on because the Regent, Mary of Guise, and the absent Queen Mary were both Catholic. Mary Queen of Scots claimed the title Queen of England when she was crowned Queen of France in 1559. Many Catholics regarded Mary as the rightful queen as they did not recognise the legality of Anne Boleyn's marriage to Henry VIII. With all of these concerns, Elizabeth could not choose England's religious path purely on the basis of personal conviction; she had to be pragmatic. She declared that she had "no desire to make windows into men's souls" and she believed that "there is only one Christ, Jesus, one faith, all else is a dispute over trifles"

What was Elizabeth's settlement for the Church of England?

Elizabeth was determined to follow a middle way. Religious legislation was to ensure Protestant doctrine, including the rejection of transubstantiation, but to keep a traditional structure to the church as well as familiar rituals. This was to reassure the European Catholic powers that the English Church had changed very little. She wanted uniformity and conformity, regardless of personal beliefs, to establish a national church acceptable to all and avoid a religious war similar to the one being conducted on the Continent.

Although the Commons passed the bills to establish the monarch as head of the Church and to establish a Protestant form of worship in 1559, the Catholic dominated Lords rejected the restoration of Protestantism, refused to repeal Mary's heresy laws and questioned Elizabeth's supremacy over the Church. Parliament was prorogued over Easter and during a carefully managed 'disputation' between the bishops of both sides in Westminster Abbey, the Catholics were forced into an act of defiance which justified the arrest of the bishops of Winchester (John White) and Lincoln. The rest of the bishops then accepted defeat.

The Act of Supremacy (1559) made the monarch Supreme Governor of the Church of England and both clergy and laity had to swear acceptance of Elizabeth's title on oath. Papal Supremacy was revoked and the Heresy Laws were repealed. An ecclesiastical commission was established to ensure the changes were implemented at the parish level and those whose loyalty was suspect were prosecuted. The structure of the Church was to stay the same, with bishops and archbishops, thus giving reassurance to any traditionalist sympathies amongst the population. This was in contrast to the Continental Protestant churches, which did not have a hierarchical structure but instead, congregations organised themselves.

The Act of Uniformity (1559) concerned the appearance of churches and the acts of worship in them. A new Book of Common Prayer, based on those of 1549 and 1552, was issued. All churches had to use it and any who refused were punished. Communion was to be in both kinds but the interpretation of whether there was a real presence in

the Eucharist or whether it was a commemorative act was left to the priest who could use the wording of either the 1549 or 1552 Prayer Book. Attendance at church on Sundays and holy days was compulsory and recusants were fined 12 pence. Church ornaments and clerical dress were to be the same as 1550 (during the second year of Edward VI's reign). This was to prevent enthusiastic Protestants attacking what was considered to be popish idolatry. The taxes known as First Fruits and Tenth were to be paid to the Crown.

These Acts were enforced by Royal Injunctions, which instructed the clergy to establish uniformity of worship and behaviour. They were to ensure a moderate but obviously Protestant church. Clergy had to teach the Royal Supremacy and denounce the pope's supremacy. Catholic practices of processions, pilgrimages and monuments to fake miracles were banned. Recusants were to be denounced to a JP or the Privy Council. Unlicensed preaching was banned to stop radical Puritans stirring up civil disorder and undermining the authority of the bishops. Each parish had to possess an English Bible (The Geneva Bible with Calvinist notes printed in 1560). Congregations had to bow at the name of Jesus and kneel in prayer. The clergy had to wear distinctive dress (vestments), including a surplice. Clerical marriage was only allowed after permission was given by the bishop and two JPs. Visiting Commissioners required the clergy to take the Oath of Supremacy and enforced the Acts and Injunctions.

In 1563 the Canterbury Convention drew up the 39 Articles, a statement of doctrinal beliefs based on Cranmer's 42 Articles. They repudiated the Catholic doctrine of the miracle of transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass and the sinlessness of the Virgin Mary. The key elements of protestant beliefs were confirmed; the authority of the scriptures, predestination (that Adam's fall compromised human free will), communion in both kinds and ministers may marry. The Articles were finally approved in 1571 and ordained clergy had to swear to uphold them.

What was Elizabeth's attitude towards the Episcopacy?

As Supreme Governor, Elizabeth needed to be represented by a body to supervise the church and enforce her decisions. Bishops were to fulfil this role as well as calming Catholic fears at home and abroad by their existence. As it turned out, however, she had more Protestant bishops than she really wished as all but one of the Marian bishops refused to take the Oath of Supremacy. To replace them she had to choose men who had been in exile during Mary's reign and had experienced a simpler form of Protestantism. The Bishops of London, Salisbury and Exeter displayed this preference in their Visitations when they approved the removal and destruction of church ornaments, such as Catholic clothing, relics and altars. Elizabeth demanded that crucifixes be returned but had to accept defeat apart from having one in her royal chapel for the eyes of foreign ambassadors. She hoped the appointment of her mother's chaplain, Matthew Parker, as Archbishop of Canterbury could check the spread of this more puritanical form of Protestantism. Elizabeth saw the settlement of 1559 as the end of the reform process but many of her new bishops thought otherwise.

What challenges did Puritans pose to the Elizabethan Church Settlement?

Although the clergy were supposed to take the Oath of Supremacy and adhere to both the Book of Common Prayer and Royal Injunctions, 400 of them, equally split between Catholic and Protestant, refused and had to resign their livings. As there were between 8,000 and 9,000 parishes, the number of dissenters was remarkably low. The controversy over Vestments, the correct clerical dress, was resolved by Parker in a compromise. Parish clergy were allowed to wear just surplices but there was to be full clerical dress in Cathedrals. Some more radical clergy opposed even this and when 37 of the 110 present at a Lambeth Palace display of correct clerical dress refused to wear clothing they believed to be Catholic, they were dismissed.

These radical reformers wanted a purer form of Protestantism and were eventually described as Puritans. Despite the support of many of the bishops, Archbishop Parker managed to keep them in check, but during the 1570s Puritan challenges increased. As supporters of Calvin's views and the establishment of a Genevan-style 'Godly Society', they wanted to push the religious settlement as far as possible in that direction. They wanted to eradicate all Catholic practices from the Church. They believed social behaviour should be controlled for the greater glory of God, necessary because mankind was sinful and weak. Life on earth was not for frivolous enjoyment or display of wealth, but for fulfilment of God's commands. The preaching of God's word, as revealed in Scripture, was emphasised, thus many, like the Presbyterians, believed that the hierarchy of bishops was un-Biblical. They wanted a church organisation based on the government of each congregation by Ministers and lay elders who could impose discipline to lead their flock to a godly way of life through example, counselling and spiritual punishments, such as excommunication. They wanted a national organisation to which congregations would send representatives to regional and national synods. These bodies would decide and impose uniform doctrine and discipline. They claimed 'presbyters' (elders) derived their authority from God and there was no need for bishops as they derived their authority from man and man was corrupt. Some Puritans were yet more extreme and refused to accept any authority which did not comply with their individual understanding of Scripture. They formed their own church made up of members of a single congregation. Discipline was imposed by members entering into an agreement or covenant, binding them to that shared interpretation. Such a system separated the Church from secular authority and Elizabeth was not prepared to accept this attack on the authority of the monarch.

Elizabeth was infuriated by the lecturing she received from leading puritan clergymen, including her archbishop, Edmund Grindal. She eventually suspended him in 1577 because he wouldn't end 'prophesying' or unlicensed preaching. On his death in 1582, the anti-Puritan, Whitgift, succeeded him. Although her rigidity created problems with some more radical Protestants, there is no evidence that the House of Commons was dominated by either Puritans or Presbyterians. In fact she was able to quash any attempts to manipulate the House by voicing disapproval, forbidding discussion of religious matters and imprisoning hotheads. She could even prorogue Parliament but she never needed to. It was only when the anti-Puritans began to develop a theory on which to base their opposition to Puritanism. They developed the concept that the

bishop was God's chosen instrument and consequently the ties between Anglicanism and Puritans were severed. This conflict was heightened in the reigns of her Stuart successors.

What challenges did Catholics pose to Elizabeth?

The background to Elizabeth's relations with Catholics was the Counter Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church's response to calls for reform. The Council of Trent 1545-63 condemned Protestant heresies and defined Catholic doctrine. It also established the training of priests in seminaries. The Jesuit order was founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1540 to undertake missionary activity and re-awaken loyalty to the Catholic Church. They were very successful at encouraging recusancy and attracting converts back from Protestantism. One of their most effective tools was Loyola's technique known as Spiritual Exercises. This involved meditation on the actual experiences of Jesus and many laymen experienced an outpouring of religious feeling and emotion, which in turn led to a new commitment. Missionary priests, trained at Douai, had started to arrive in England following Elizabeth's excommunication in 1570. Despite fears that they would be a major threat, their effectiveness was not widespread and three of them were executed after being caught. The first Jesuits to arrive in England were Edward Campion and Robert Parsons in 1580. They immediately began to build up a network of safe houses, mostly belonging to the gentry class. Unlike Parsons, who was told to avoid political matters, Campion was more provocative. He was hunted down, captured in a hiding place in a Berkshire manor house and eventually hanged, drawn and quartered as a traitor in 1581.

Elizabeth saw Catholicism as a threat to her throne and to what she considered to be true religion. With deteriorating relations with Spain, by the presence of Mary Queen of Scots, viewed by many Catholics as the legitimate Queen of England and then Philip's attempts to invade England in 1588, it is not surprising she should do so. By the end of her reign, however, Catholicism was withering. Elizabeth had largely avoided punitive legislation in order to win over the recusants and it was only the threats of the 1580s which led to more severe measures. Largely, however, she could rely on the instinctive loyalty felt by the Catholic Gentry. The same could not be said of her successor.

In concluding this examination of the English Reformation in 1603, no account is taken of the religious conflict between Charles I and his Parliament, nor is the fact that the Church of England, as we recognise it today, did not emerge until Charles II's 1662 settlement. There is no doubt, however, that England was transformed from the Catholic country inherited by Henry VIII in 1509 to a Protestant one at the end of Elizabeth's reign. The publication of the Bible in English allowed men and women to discover their own faith and path to salvation. By 1603 a national Christianity had been established which could define its own doctrines, decide on liturgy and be independent of a foreign spiritual authority and England went on to embrace the leadership role in Protestant Europe.