

History: Unit 2  
Lesson 8 of 30

# How did Elizabeth's settlement try to solve the religious issue?



# What was Elizabeth's religious settlement?



# Elizabeth's religious settlement, 1559

The settlement of the religious question was a concern for **Elizabeth**. The years between 1533-1558 are often described as a 'religious rollercoaster'. This was due to the changes made by **Henry VIII, Edward VI** and **Mary I**.

**Henry VIII** was a strong defender of the Catholic church in the early years of his reign when the Protestant Reformation took place in parts of Europe. However, he created the Church of England in 1533 which took Protestant ideas and England was described as 'Catholic without the Pope'. **Edward VI's** advisors introduced further Protestant reforms such as the English Prayer Book. **Mary I** reversed the changes of her brother and father until the church was back to how it was before 1533.

Elizabeth herself was raised as a moderate Protestant, so she had to decide carefully how to manage the religious divisions and confusion that existed on her accession.



# Elizabeth's religious settlement, 1559

## Act of Supremacy, 1559

The **Act of Supremacy** was a parliamentary act that made Elizabeth Supreme Governor of the Church of England and removed the authority of the **Pope Pius IV** in Rome. **Henry VIII** had done the same, but named himself 'Supreme Head' of the church of England.

Elizabeth's new title of 'Supreme Governor' was designed to suggest that she was not comparing herself to God or the Pope. It was hoped this would please Catholics and Puritans who were both uncomfortable with monarchs being the head of the Church.

The hierarchy of the church still remained, with two archbishops and roughly 40 bishops who were responsible for the priests in the local area.

All members of the clergy had to swear an oath (promise) to accept Elizabeth and support her as Supreme Governor.



# Elizabeth's religious settlement, 1559

## Act of Uniformity, 1559

The **Act of Uniformity** made Protestantism the official faith and set out rules of church services and worship in a revised Book of Common prayer that had to be used.

The description of **Communion** in the Book of Common Prayer was purposely vague so that Catholics and Protestants could interpret it how they wished. Catholics believed the body and blood of Christ were present due to a miracle performed by the priest, whereas Protestants believed the bread and wine taken during Communion were symbolic of his body and blood.

The Act set out what priests should wear in the church - they continued to wear Catholic-style vestments and some decoration such as candles was tolerated.



# Elizabeth's religious settlement, 1559

## Royal Injunctions, 1559

The **Royal Injunctions** (think of them as instructions) was a set of instructions issued by William Cecil. It gave specific details to support members of the clergy in setting out the churches and services.

The Bible had to be in English and each church was to have a copy. In addition, anyone preaching had to have a licence from the government. Elizabeth did this so that there was consistency and to stop people (such as extreme Catholics or Puritans) preaching and trying to change the message of the religious settlement.

**Recusancy** (non-attendance at church) was met with a small fine. Everyone in the local church community was expected to attend church on Sundays.



# Glossary

**Act of Supremacy** - a law that made Elizabeth Supreme Governor of the church of England and removed the authority of the Pope

**Act of Uniformity** - a law that set out the structure and appearance of the new Church of England

**Royal Injunctions** - A list of instructions given to the clergy with specific details of how church services should be carried out

**Recusancy** - a term used to describe the practice of not attending church



# Questions - let's test your understanding!

1. What does it mean to say that Elizabeth needed to 'settle the religious question in England'?
2. What was the Act of Supremacy?
3. How would the different religious groups react to the Act of Supremacy?
4. What was the Act of Uniformity and what were the Royal Injunctions?
5. How would the different religious groups react to the Act of Uniformity and Royal injunctions?

**Challenge yourself:** How successful do you think Elizabeth was in her settlement of the religious question?

