

Summary of Elizabethan Religious Change

Elizabeth I's reign was defined by the establishment and consolidation of a moderate Protestant Church of England. The Elizabethan Religious Settlement sought a middle way between Catholicism and radical Protestantism, but it faced opposition from both sides. Catholics were increasingly persecuted as potential traitors, while Puritans, who wanted further reforms, also faced repression. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, Protestantism was firmly established as the religion of the state, but religious tensions persisted, setting the stage for future conflicts in the Stuart period..

Pre-Elizabethan Context

- 1534 **Act of Supremacy** – Under Henry VIII, the Church of England is established, breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church, with the King as its Supreme Head.
- 1539 **Act of Six Articles** – Reaffirms traditional Catholic doctrines within the Church of England, signaling a conservative turn.
- 1547 **Death of Henry VIII** – His son Edward VI, a Protestant, ascends the throne, leading to more Protestant reforms.
- 1549 **First Book of Common Prayer** – Introduced under Edward VI, this book becomes the standard for worship in the Church of England, emphasizing Protestant doctrines.
- 1553 **Mary I Becomes Queen** – Mary Tudor, a devout Catholic, restores Roman Catholicism and persecutes Protestants, leading to the Marian Persecutions.

Elizabethan Era Begins

- November 17, 1558 **Elizabeth I Becomes Queen** – Elizabeth Tudor ascends the throne, succeeding her half-sister Mary I. Her reign marks the beginning of efforts to stabilize the religious divide in England.

1559: Establishment of Religious Settlement

- April 1559 **Act of Supremacy** – Reestablishes the Church of England's independence from Rome. Elizabeth is declared the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England, a title designed to appease both Catholics and Protestants.
- April 1559 **Act of Uniformity** – Mandates the use of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer in all church services, establishing a moderate form of Protestantism as the official religion. Attendance at Anglican services is made compulsory.
- Summer 1559 **Royal Injunctions** – Further enforce the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, requiring clergy to wear specific vestments, use the Book of Common Prayer, and remove "superstitious" images from churches.

1560s: Consolidation & Resistance

- 1560 **Geneva Bible** is published in England, becoming popular among English Protestants and reflecting the influence of Calvinism.
- 1563 **Thirty-Nine Articles** – The Church of England's doctrines are formalized in the Thirty-Nine Articles, which define the theological stance of Anglicanism, balancing Protestant and some Catholic elements.

1560s: Consolidation & Resistance (cont)

- 1566 **Vestiarian Controversy** – Puritans, who are dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement, protest the requirement for clergy to wear specific vestments, which they view as too Catholic.

1570s: Catholic Threats & Protestant Puritanism

- 25 February 1570 **Papal Bull Regnans in Excelsis** – Pope Pius V excommunicates Elizabeth I and absolves her subjects from allegiance to her, encouraging Catholic plots against her rule.
- 1571 **Treasons Act** – In response to the Papal Bull, this act makes it treason to declare that Elizabeth is not the lawful queen or to call her a heretic. It also makes possession of the Papal Bull a treasonable offense.
- 1571 **Ridolfi Plot** – A Catholic conspiracy, led by Roberto di Ridolfi, to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots. The plot is uncovered, leading to executions of conspirators.



1570s: Catholic Threats & Protestant Puritanism (cont)

1572 ****Cartwright and Puritanism** – Thomas Cartwright, a leading Puritan, argues for a Presbyterian system of church governance, rejecting the hierarchical structure of the Church of England.

1580s: Conflicts & Catholic Repression

1580 **Arrival of Jesuits** – Jesuits and seminary priests begin to arrive secretly in England to support the Catholic cause, including notable figures like Edmund Campion.

1581 **Act to Retain the Queen's Majesty's Subjects in their Due Obedience** – This act increases penalties for recusancy (refusal to attend Anglican services) and makes converting to Catholicism treasonable.

1583 **Throckmorton Plot** – Another Catholic plot to depose Elizabeth and place Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne, supported by Spain and the Pope. The plot is uncovered, leading to the execution of Francis Throckmorton.

1584 **Bond of Association** – An agreement by Elizabeth's supporters to execute anyone who attempts to usurp the throne or assassinate the queen.

1580s: Conflicts & Catholic Repression (cont)

1585 **Act Against Jesuits and Seminary Priests** – This act orders all Jesuits and Catholic priests to leave England within 40 days or face execution. It also makes it a capital offense to harbor priests.

1586 **Babington Plot** – A Catholic plot to assassinate Elizabeth and free Mary, Queen of Scots, leading to Mary's execution in 1587.

1590s: Continued Religious Tensions

1593 **Act Against Puritans** – The Conventicle Act is passed to suppress Puritan meetings outside of the Church of England. This marks the government's increasing hostility towards non-conformity within Protestantism.

1595 **Lambeth Articles** – These Calvinist-leaning doctrinal statements are issued by Archbishop Whitgift, reinforcing the Protestant nature of the Church of England but also highlighting the tension between Calvinists and more moderate Anglicans.

1597-1601 **Essex Rebellion** – The Earl of Essex's failed rebellion in 1601, although politically motivated, reflects underlying religious and political discontent at the end of Elizabeth's reign.

End of the Elizabethan Era & Legacy

1601 **Poor Law Act** – While not directly religious, this act reflects the Elizabethan government's concern with social stability, influenced by the Protestant ethic of work and charity.

1603 **Death of Elizabeth I** – Elizabeth dies on March 24, 1603. Her death marks the end of the Tudor dynasty and the Elizabethan era, but her religious policies leave a lasting legacy in the establishment of a Protestant England.

Post-Elizabethan Developments

1604 **Hampton Court Conference** – Under James I, the conference attempts to address Puritan grievances, leading to the commissioning of the King James Bible in 1611.

1605 **Gunpowder Plot** – A Catholic conspiracy to blow up the Houses of Parliament and kill James I, further entrenching anti-Catholic sentiment in England.



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