People in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century were extremely religious and were prepared to die for their beliefs. However, there were many unsettling changes to the religion of England during the 118 years that the Tudors were in power.

This was the period when people started to have new and fresh ideas in regards to religion and people began to challenge the previously traditional, single belief in the Catholic Church and the Pope.

England began as a pure Catholic country under Henry VIII, yet ended up becoming the battleground for conflicting religions by the end of the Tudor dynasty. At the end of it all, Protestantism displaced Catholicism as the religion of England.
Henry VIII

Henry began his reign as a firm promoter for Catholicism, yet by his death, he had undertaken a series of measures to lessen the Church’s powers.

At first, Henry continued the loyalty and devotion to Christianity that all of his predecessors had shown as he used to treat cruelly anyone who criticized the Church after having gone on a pilgrimage, himself, to the Abbey of Hailes in Gloucestershire, in 1513.

There, he pledged his faith and prayed for a son as he lit candles and knelt before statues of the Virgin Mary as well as kissed the holy relic.

Later, he even published a book which attacked the views of the first advocate for the Protestant religion, a monk named Martin Luther. Consequently, Henry received the title ‘fidei defensor’ - Defender of Faith from the Pope.

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Reformation under Henry VIII

The positive relationship as a good Catholic eventually broke down as Henry sought control, wealth and power; this was the start of the conflicting reformation.

Henry introduced England to a new form of religion by defying the Pope and the Catholic Church. He made many controversial, hypocritical, yet key changes:

- Monasteries were shut down
- He declared himself the head of the Church in England
- He executed those who defended the Pope as the rightful head of the Church
- Law was altered to ban worship of statues or relics (Idolatry)
- Pilgrimages were condemned

Calls for reform – Germany

The source and start of all the calls for reform originated from Germany. Triggered at first by a German monk named Martin Luther. He visited Rome to purify his soul, yet, there, he began doubting the teachings of Christianity. Consequently, he began to challenge and protest against the Church and the Pope. He argued:

- Indulgences were a fraud
- Popes claimed false powers
- The Church had ignored the words of the Bible
- The Church was greedy

He was supported by other members of the society such as ‘anti-clericals’ – the people who complain about corruption of the clergy or ministers of the Church. There were also ‘humanists’-scholars who were against the ignorance of many of the clergy. They believe that the Church had twisted the meaning of the Bible and cheated ordinary people (i.e. paying to view relics which could have been fake!)
Reform in Germany

Martin Luther became famous – a hero who defended ordinary people against greedy priests and popes. Thus, significant changes took place in Germany:

- The Pope’s authority was ended, services were held in German
- Abolishing of relics, pilgrimages or statues of saints
- Congregations now received both bread and wine at Communion

Calls for reform - England

The Protestant religious ideas quickly spread to England although continuity of the Roman Catholic Church at first prevailed. Books about Luther’s ideas were burned.

Widespread stories of corruption and greedy clergies led to increased support for Luther’s ideas although general support could still not be achieved in Britain.

Henry however began to take a changed view on anti-Catholic ideas when he became desperate for a son, something which his first wife, Catherine of Aragon could not bring. Thus, he started questioning whether he had sinned by marrying the ex-wife of his brother as this was not allowed in the bible. This marriage was granted by the Pope but he now questions if the Pope has the authority to alter God’s words.

Henry realised the Church had too much power and decided to break away from Rome. He appointed Cranmer and Cromwell to his Council who shared his views.

Reform in England

Actions were taken when Anne Boleyn became pregnant. Henry married her in secret, thus, defying Catholic ways and Cranmer declared the first marriage was false.

Following this, Cromwell managed to persuade Parliament to end the authority of the Pope and name the king as the Supreme Head of the Church of England; taxes were now paid to him. Oaths were taken and clergies were forced to accept Boleyn as Queen through the ‘Act of Succession’, in 1534. Opposition was punished by death.

Having gotten rid of Catherine as Queen, Henry had to worry about revenge from Charles V of Spain as Catherine was his aunt. Thus, Cromwell solved the King’s lack of money needed to defend the country by attacking monasteries. He ordered inspections and returned with shaming results depicting the clergies’ unholy negligence. This provided an excuse for Cromwell to persuade parliament to shut down monasteries so their treasures could be taken.

This displeased many and an uprising known as ‘The Pilgrimage of Grace’ broke out in 1536, in the north, led by Robert Aske, demanding monasteries be brought back. This 40,000 strong rebellion was resolved by deception and the traitors were hanged.

This success pushed the King on to continue attacking Catholicism. In 1538, pilgrimages and saints’ days’ celebration were banned. Relics and statues were also destroyed. The Bible was even translated into English.

However, Henry was firmly against Protestantism and the ‘Act of Six Articles’ outlawed Protestant ideas in 1539. The rejection of Protestantism and the beheading of Cromwell seemed to have ended England’s Reformation.
Edward VI

Succeeding Henry at only 9 years old, Edward was too young to make decisions himself. During his 6 years reign, the Duke of Somerset, acting as Lord Protector along with his tutors influenced the religion of England; they were all critical of traditional Catholic teachings and were firmly Protestants. Somerset, thus, began to gradually make changes to the Church. Firstly, he abolished ‘The Act of Six Articles’ which outlawed Protestant beliefs. Following this, censorship of Protestant ideas were loosened.

Similar to Martin Luther, the leader for the teachings of Protestantism became John Calvin by 1547 - a French protestant from Geneva. He encouraged Protestants to defy the Catholic beliefs and set up their own church. He also believed in upholding a strict moral code based off the bible.

Protestants strongly believed that people’s fates were planned by God before birth, thus it did not matter what happens to people in their lives; they did not fear persecution.

Rise of Protestantism

Somerset and Cranmer cautiously began making changes to the religion of Britain. They firstly forced people to remove statues and stop worshipping them; Protestants do not believe in superstition. Then, they moved on to abolishing ceremonies and rituals of the Christian year. Statues of St George and the Dragon that were used in processions were removed and craftsmen were dismissed. Corpus Christi processions were also stopped as was Easter ceremonies and its traditions.

Ultimately, these changes led to the Prayer Book Rebellion with the change to the new Prayer Book in 1549 coupled with Mass conducted in English being the catalysts for riots.

Reformation continues...

People were displeased with the reform but feared the people behind it even more. Thus, more Protestant reforms took place after the rebellion as oppositions had been removed and Protestants replaced Catholics in positions of power (council, clergy etc.)

- Priests can marry
- The mass was abolished and replaced by Lord’s Supper
- Second Prayer Book was written
- Congregation received both bread and wine
- Gold plates and church decorations were confiscated and replaced by plain, simple objects; paintings were whitewashed
- Priests were renamed ministers and had to wear simple black clothes

Edward died in 1553, leaving Mary Tudor as the next monarch to succeed the throne. She was, however, very Catholic and thus, Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed Queen in hope of keeping England a Protestant country. This managed to last only 13 days and ‘Bloody Mary’ came into power, changing up England’s religions again!
Mary Tudor

Mary was a firm Roman Catholic despite Protestant reforms and views her family had. When she came into power, she was adamant on returning England to a Catholic country and reinstate the control of the Pope. She wanted to reverse all the religious alterations that had been made. She made the following changes:

- Damages to the churches were repaired and restored
- Statues of saints and stone altars restored
- Ceremonies and processions were revived
- Mass was permitted again and services were held in Latin
- Leading Protestant bishops and priests were arrested
- It became illegal to use the Protestant Prayer book

Monasteries had to continue stay shut as the land had been given to the nobles and Mary could not afford to buy it back. Thus, the monks would have no income.

‘Bloody Mary’

Mary married Philip II of Spain (also Catholic) but faced many oppositions. Sir Wyatt, a knight, tried to prevent the marriage by leading a revolt but ultimately failed.

Following this, Mary started publicly burning Protestants as she believed this could destroy the ‘evil’ in their ‘wicked’ bodies; their souls can thus be released. The victims were largely ordinary people with the ‘wrong’ beliefs but also key figures as well such as Cranmer and Protestant clergies.

Although this made Mary unpopular with many people, the majority had accepted again traditional beliefs in Roman Catholicism by 1558 and there were no revolts.

Mary died in 1558 without an heir and thus the Protestant Elizabeth became Queen.
Elizabeth I

England had yet another ruler after the death of Mary, and with that another change in religion. Elizabeth was a firm believer of Protestantism, however, she was clever in knowing she could not enforce too many changes so to not upset the people. Initially, she tried to establish a middle ground between the two extreme religious beliefs...

- Stopped burnings of Protestants
- Monarch replaced Pope as head of the Church of England
- Church services were conducted in English; service was still not the Mass
- Ministers (priests) were allowed to wear fancy robes
- Crucifixes permitted; Church will be ruled by bishops
- Devout Catholics who missed Church were not persecuted but only fined

She hoped that these new laws, known as her Religious Settlements, will bring a peaceful solution as she tolerated people’s beliefs.

Change towards Protestantism

The hatred from the opposing religions of each other meant the situation did not work. As a result, following the Northern Rebellion of 1569 where Mary, Queen of Scots (a Catholic who tried to claim the throne) was defeated, Elizabeth stopped the tolerance of Catholicism. New laws now banned Catholic priests from entering the country. Fines for missing church was also increased so that even the wealthy were forced to attend; the ones who disobeyed got sent to prison. Houses of Catholic nobles were also searched for hiding priests and plotters were punished by death for treason. Many cases of torture occurred as they tried to make people confess.

At the end of this Tudor period, it was clear the new Protestant ideas were firmly in place in Britain. As it turns out, Mary Tudor would be the last openly practicing Catholic to sit on the throne (apart from James II for a short period) as England became a Protestant country.

Profile

Name: Elizabeth I
Religion: Protestant
Born: September 7, 1533
Parents: Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn
Siblings: Edward, Mary and Henry FitzRoy (1st Duke of Richmond and Somerset)
Death: March 24, 1603

Hunt for Catholic Priests

In order to protect the Queen from Catholic traitors, spies and soldiers were established to search for Catholic priests. They hid in ‘Priest holes’...

- Behind the chimney
- Beneath a staircase
- Behind the wooden panelling
Glossary & Key Vocabulary

**Reformation**: Attempts to reform the Catholic Church and the development of Protestant Churches in Western Europe

**Protestant**: a form of Christian faith that originated with the Protestant Reformation, a movement against what its followers considered to be errors in the Roman Catholic Church

**Persecution**: hostility and ill treatment due to religious belief

**Clergy**: e.g. priests, bishops, cardinals, nuns, monks, the Pope

**Indulgences**: a grant of forgiveness given by the Pope

**Treason**: action of betraying one’s country

**Relics**: sacred objects preserved in churches (i.e. bones of deceased bishop). By viewing these, God’s punishments for sins will be lessened.

**Congregation**: group of people assembled for religious worship

**Idolatry**: worship of statues and images

**Priest Hole**: Small, secret hiding places

Summary - Key Changes

- Henry VIII split away from the Pope and Roman Catholic
- Edward VI was pro Protestant
- Mary I wanted return to Catholic faith
- Elizabeth I tried to strike peace by taking ‘middle way’ in religions

Britain ended up a **Protestant** country by the end of 1603

Joshua J