

# Religion and politics in great britain history essay

[History](#)



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(America doesn't have an official religion but they are very faithful, and  
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### **1. Religion in medieval times**

Ever since Antiquity people felt the need to believe in the existence of something almighty, someone who could hear their prayers, someone who could send rain or sun on Earth, someone who could protect them from enemies or evil.... Whether we talk about the famous Zamolxes or Aphrodite, Zeus, Allah, Jesus Christ or other deities; the Religion has played a great role in people's lives. The word religion derives from Latin religionem (nominative religio)" Respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods," in Late Latin " monastic life". However, popular etymology among the later ancients (and many modern writers) connects it with religare " to bind fast", via notion of " place an obligation on," or " bond between humans and God" (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=religion>)After centuries of polytheism, atheism, a new fashionable modern cult from East appeared: Christianity.

This new religion unlike the Romans, represented the religion of those who confess their faith in Jesus Christ and the forbiddance of worshipping other gods than Jesus . This brought persecutions for Christians so that they had to meet in secret in caves or forests sometimes...The roots of Christianity emerged in the 1st century before Christ; although we tend to say that Christianity took shape in the 6th century. For the Roman emperor Constantine, a single religion with a single God seemed the best idea to unite the people creating a powerful military empire. Once with the Edict of Milan from 313, Constantine tolerated the Christian worship in the Roman territories. The ideology of Christianity was a movement of protest, in the hope that one day the promised One shall come, the Messiah. The idea of the appearance of the Savior is spread all over the places, on the Roman territories, becoming a threat for the political and military stability of Rome. This state in fact led to the atrocities against the Christians, the most cruel being those from Nero's period. The episode of the persecuted Christians is well-known in history. Nero was a crazy emperor, also known as the Antichrist (against the teachings of Christ) they were afraid of him, his cruelty was beyond human minds, this man killed his wife and proclaimed himself a god denying the existence of any other God. In his madness he burnt the city blaming the Christians for his foolish act. Being captured, the Christians were praying and crying, some of them being burnt, some others were being feast for lions. They died for their faith and they were called " martyrs". In the 4th century, people still had their heart as stone and they were still worshipping other gods, but Christianity although it was a minor faith, a small light in the Dark Ages, it survived and continued to gain followers within the Western parts of Britain.

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## **1. 1 Christianity in England**

According to Cristopher Hibbert (page 32-33), at the end of the 6th century, Ethelbert, the King of Kent perhaps under the influence of his wife Bertha, daughter of Charibert, one of the Merovingian kings of the Franks who was Christian, asked Pope Gregory to send missionaries, so he met Augustine, the Prior of Saint Andrew's Monastery in Rome whom was given the task to spread the message of the Bible, to convert the English to Christianity. Being suspicious about the stranger, the King receives him in open air, but soon the sincerity of the pious Augustine touched his heart and he left the way open in order to complete his great mission. People of Kent were gathering and listening carefully the words full of wisdom and truth spoken by the Pope's envoy, and in a few months the English decided to follow Jesus Christ, therefore to embrace Christianity and the King of Kent himself became Christian. Augustine had been given a house for his adepts in Canterbury and in 597 he was ordained as Bishop of the English. In 604 Mellitus, another missionary from Rome was established in London as Bishop where King Ethelbert built a church dedicated to St Paul. The savages Londoners were hardly communicative, thus his task was more difficult than he expected. After the death of the King, the people of London rejected their Bishop, carrying him out of the city gates returning to their heathenism and former priests for several decades. Christianity gained many followers and the gospel could be preached not only by the missionaries from the Continent but also by the Celtic missionaries from Scotland and Ireland. One of the most known missionaries is St Patrick from Ireland. He was captured at the age of 16 by a group of pirates in Ireland and served as a slave during 6 years. His company was the field full of grass and the flocks of sheep, oftenly <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-politics-in-great-britain-history-essay/>

he was meditating about his life, considering this terrible fact as a punishment for his lack of faith in God. He spent his time praying a lot unifying his spirit with God." I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time".(Saint Patrick, Confessio, translated from Latin)He managed to escape and returned back to his parents choosing the priest vocation. After a dream, he was inspired to get back to the country where he was enslaved and preached the word of God. Although he had troubles with the local pagans and was imprisoned several times, he did not give up...he was happy that he could serve God, to be a tool for God's plan of salvation." I seemed to hear the voice of those who were beside the forest of Foclut which is near the western sea, and they were crying as if with one voice: ' We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us'.(Saint Patrick, Confessio, translated from Latin)And it was such a good inspiration because the Irish started to believe in this almighty God, His miracles and His love for the sinners so they converted to Christianity. The missionaries who came from Rome argued that Pope's authority was supreme, the Irish were not ready to accept Catholic tradition about the date of Easter, and thus this controversy about the date of Easter had to be solved. In 664, B. C, the Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria and the Celtic Christians organized a meeting, the Synod of Whitby which was to decide whether to follow Celtic or Roman usages . King Oswald decided in favor of Rome because it was believed that Catholic Church followed the teachings of St. Peter " the one who holds the keys of heaven". The Venerable Bede describes the synod in his book Ecclesiastical <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-politics-in-great-britain-history-essay/>

History of the English People." The Roman and Celtic Church were torn by a dispute that was so often arcane but bitter it arose from differences in dating Easter and came to a head when the Northumbrian king's Celtic Easter clashed with his queen's Roman observance. A synod was held at Whitby in 664 Roman practices were adapted and an organized and united Church evolved". (Faith, by BRYAN...)Although The Synod of Whitby achieved unity, it couldn't maintain stability, so for the next five years the Church started to lose its credibility and its impact upon the English. This situation culminated with the disasters caused by the pestilence which damaged the population and the lands. After the death of Deusdedit, the Archbishop of Canterbury in 664, no one else was appointed as a leader of the Church for five years. The elderly monk from Asia Minor, Theodore of Tarsus brought a new sense of inspiration and life for the Church . At sixty-six years old, he organized the church, he appointed bishops for Rochester, Dunwich and Winchester and he summoned all the bishops at the synod of Hertford in 672. This synod was to be held regularly at Clofeshoh every year and the issues which were to be discussed were about the relationships of the bishops with their religious houses in their territory, the administration of the marriage laws, order and uniformity in all the country. Theodore managed to make the English Church obey his wise judgment and his advice was sought by many people. He even wrote a book Penitential which comprised punishments for those sinners who wanted to reconcile with the Church, punished for the worst sins: drunkenness, fornication, theft and homicide. He died in 690 and he left behind him a powerful, well-organized and self-confident Church. Once the Church regained its authority, the leaders of the Church imposed all kinds of fees and its influence increased more and more every year. Till the end of <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-politics-in-great-britain-history-essay/>

the 8th century, England became a Catholic state. Churches and monasteries were built; the Christians attended the religious services every Sunday where they were worshipping Jesus Christ," the Lamb who lifts peoples sins."

### **1. 1. 1 Education**

The bases of education were also founded by the Church . It was the only source of Education in the Middle Ages. The French ruler, Charlemagne wanted his empire to be educated in order to survive, so he returned back to the Catholic Church. His decree was that every monastery and cathedral should establish a school where boys could be able to study. The girls were forbidden to learn in schools, only the rich daughters of nobles could have access to the monastic schools. The main courses taught by the monks were Arithmetic, Astrology, Natural Sciences, Philosophy, Logic and of course Latin Grammar which was necessary because both the religious services and the Bible were in Latin. Although the pupils were noble, they used to sit together on the floor. They used bones or ivory stylus. They used to scrawl notes on wax coated wooden blocks and their knowledge was based on religiosity. The taxes for ordinary people were too high and it represented an advantage for the Church because it could control them, only rich and powerful families could afford to pay schools and the Knights had to learn also to read and to write in order to know the code of chivalry requested by the Church and the clergy. Many battles and wars, damaged the monasteries and the centers of education, but they were rebuilt and the two most important of them became famous universities which exists at present: Oxford and Cambridge which are elite universities coveted by all students. By the end of the 8th century, the Vikings brought destruction and death upon England. The most

of the churches had been destroyed, the libraries were burnt and the monks and priests were killed or taken as slaves. These events manifested in the history of England in the 9th and 10th century weakening the political power of the Church, letting the installed anarchy to say its word. But even in this situation England remained a great temptation for the neighbors who desired the expansion. Thus at the mid of 11th century, the Normand threat became more and more impending, so that a powerful Normand king decided to invade the insular territory therefore in 1066, at Hastings Wilhelm the Conqueror wins the battle against the English imposing the Normand domination upon the kingdom of England. From this moment the Viking influence upon England ends. The Normand invasion had a well-motivated reason, the descendants and the succession to throne of Wilhelm. This fact conferred the Norman king the right to conquer England and to remain in power. Once it was achieved, Wilhelm installed his authority in the administrative, political and religious apparatus. Being recognized and crowned by the Catholic Church, the new king obtained power, having full obedience from his subjects. The order started to install under the Norman tutelage. The Church had a major influence; it controlled almost all aspects of life. The Bishops started to introduce taxes, and became very powerful people, leading monasteries, churches and various lands. The Catholic Church influenced the kings and the rulers of Europe. Whoever opposed its power were to be excommunicated (they were forbidden to participate at the religious services and their soul would go straight to hell when they were to die). The nobles contributed with considerable sums of money in order to assure their place in heaven.




## **1. 2 The Crusades-God's will or political interest?**

One of the most remarkable moments from religion's history is represented by the Crusades-military expeditions for the liberation of the holy places-emphasizing the power of Church and the impact over the population. The four armed pilgrimages took place in the Middle Ages between the 11th century and the beginning of the 13th century. The knights who fought in the crusades were in fact warrior monks who were against the pagans under the orders of the Church. Even their shield and cloaks had the symbol of the Holy Cross (Christian sign) which was visible for everyone. I would say that these crusades proceeded into a minor form, the motivation of the Holocaust created by the Nazi. Once with Saint . Basil's canon in the Eastern Church banned those " who commit murder at war" from taking communion, they feared that the crusades had a sinful character. The Dictatus " established that the Church of Rome cannot mistake in any concern, and anyone who opposed its wishes won't be considered Catholic and the pope had the power to release the vassals unjust men from their oath of loyalty". Whoever dared to criticize the papal ordained crusades was to be excommunicated. The crusaders used the Bible in order to justify their " holy actions":

**“ Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God”.**

**(Deuteronomy 20: 16-18) [http://enrichmentjournal. ag. org/201004/201004\\_138\\_Canannites. cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.org/201004/201004_138_Canannites.cfm)**

The first crusade from 1095 was motivated by the leaders of the Church with the purpose of releasing the city where the holy tomb was. The forgiveness of sins promised by the Church for those who took part in the war was the basic motive for which thousands and thousands of people joined the holy army. Worse is the fact that till the army arrived to the Holy Land, the crusaders plundered and destroyed the communities of Jews in their way. But every act of them was justified as being “ God’s will”. Brian Moynahan, the author of the book  " The Faith talks about the fact that he warriors did not include conversion in the wars, and it seems that voluntary desires to get baptized were mostly rejected. The second crusade begins in 1147 and it ends in 1149 having the same doctrines imposed by the Church, but it proves to be a failure in front of the Muslims. Thus this second crusade proved that the Occidental armies weren’t prepared to impose the Christian domination in the targeted areas. After four decades the kings of Europe decide to start a new war against the pagans. In 1189, the holy armies trigger the 3rd crusade . An important character who remained in history

through his actions was the king of England, Richard I, known as Richard Lionheart. This controversial man was the king of England in 1189-1191, but his real rule was only during six months. Son of Henry II, and Eleanor of Aquitania, Richard was born in 1157, being one of the five children of the king of England. At 30 years, he received the royal crown, and became the leader of the 3rd crusade. He proves to be a skilful man in what concerns the military plan, emphasized in the battles on the holy territory, becoming the only one who leads the war. During this period, Richard's brother, John, tried to overtake the power in England, but he failed. All these facts were forgiven by Lionheart at his returning to England in 1194. Besides the 3rd crusade, Richard I, fought on the territories of France . In 1199, after such a battle, he is killed and John becomes King of England. His lack of experience in battles brought many defeats, so that England had to pay for the war damages. These expenses had to be incurred by the Royal treasury so that the king imposed new laws which increased taxes and fees which were exaggerated for the population. This situation led to the pope's lack of trust in John. The pope excommunicated the king for his interference in naming the archbishop of Canterbury and took over the rule of England. The people were not allowed to get married, to baptize children without the consent of the pope. New taxes were imposed for: marriage ceremony, burial ceremony, christening ceremony, blessed objects, holy water, pieces of the holy cross and many others, considering that it was a great thing in God's eyes. People blamed John for the tension which brought the Catholic Church and rebelled against him. In 1213, the king had to cede the spiritual well-being of the country to the pope, and in 1214 the ruler of the church decreed that anyone could overthrow John. The church had the major power now, while John,

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defeated at Bouvines, losing all the possessions of England in France, instigated a whole nation against him. He died in 1216, being a shame for the kingdom of England. People fought in these holy wars thinking about their souls, in fact this is what religion refers to, to be concerned about one's soul, to gain a place in Paradise to embrace the truth of the Gospel. They were taught to be warriors", to fight for God", they said, but they did not realize that the Holy Book presents Jesus Christ as a humble man, ready to turn the other cheek when He is slapped; preferring peace instead war. The Church had a major influence upon people, very easily the men of God led people into battles telling them that is the right thing to do, the way to redeem their souls...Even though a leader of the Church suppose to be a man dedicated to God discouraging sin and following peace, not everyone could resist the temptation to gain immunity, to get rich and to fool people as they wish. . It is well known that it is a sin to kill, so the crusaders fought for something which was not sufficiently motivated, not demanded by God but claimed by the Church, they killed for power, they killed for land, they killed for political interest. Pilgrimage was the most powerful form of penance. The road of Jerusalem, which was difficult, could wash away many sins. Augustine claimed that the syntagm " holy war" was a wrong phrase for " no one has a monopoly on the divine truth". The most expected reward was confirmed " whoever dies, when waging war against the infidels, merits the celestial kingdom". " The sermon at Claremont was a matter of law and the Church formally reserved to itself the right to initiate religion's war and heretic hunts"( jrkghgkghkr)All the crusades had political interests as the annexation of the territories and the discovering of natural resources.

### **1. 3 Innocent blood-the martyrs**

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity predicted about Christian persecution. (" Ye shall be hated of all men for my names's sake" ). He was teaching his disciples that their death in the name of Christ would bring salvation for their soul. The story about the holy man: Jesus Christ describes the persecutions and the passions which He endured in order to be crucified, to redeem the mankind. The Gospel suggest us to take the Savior's example, to behave as him, to accept the sufferings and even death, as part of God's great plan. (" He that endured to the end, the shame shall be saved" ).

Courage was not the basic motive for the martyrs, but the fear of Judgment Day, when the Almighty will judge them for denying their faith in Jesus.

Thomas Becket was born into an upper class Norman family in London. He became chancellor to King Henry II. Not only that he was the leader of many campaigns against the French, and a sort of delegate of the king, but he was also his intimae friend. In 1162, Becket becomes the Archbishop of Canterbury, but within this change, he also changed...he did not follow the interests of the state anymore, but the benefits of the church. Greed surrounded both Henry and Thomas and their friendship started to collapse, as we can also see nowadays; money is more precious than friendships or duty. According to Great leaders of the Christian Church, in the medieval times, people used to compare kings with God. The Bible describes Jesus Christ as " prince of peace", " king of kings", but He was also a " Rabuni"-a teacher who led people to the road of Christianity, which means He was a priest. But because He was the Son of God, He was a king:" While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, " This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

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<http://bible.cc/matthew/17-5.htm> (Mathew 17: 5)The applied judicial system within the state and church was different. It seemed unfair for Henry to see that the law wasn't the same for everyone. (p. 152, Great Leaders of the Christian Church)A cleric who murdered a knight was easily forgiven by making an oath in the front of the church, while a knight who committed such an act was either exiled or hung. Henry wanted to change the system; he wanted to administer equal law for Englishmen making appeal to the Constitution of Clarendon. The constitution emphasized the relationship state-church. No one had the right to send letters or speak to the pope without the king's consent, he had the last word. The powerful leader of the church was against Henry's wish, he felt that through this the church would lose its power. The war between the two leaders ended with the exile of Becket in France. He spent six years in France where he tried to attenuate any argument and condemned everyone who was in touch with the king. Because of the fact that King Henry crowned his son under the blessing of Roger, Archbishop of York, Becket initiated a campaign against Henry, so he accepted a compromise returning back to his Episcopal duties. Once he was again the Archbishop of Canterbury, he excommunicated those who participated at the crowning ceremony. The condemned people went to Normandy where the king was that time, and told him Becket's feats. In a transport of anger, he shouted he wanted to get rid of the traitor. The knights took King's words in serious and went back to England where without the consent pf Henry, they killed Becket in front of the cathedral, turning him into a martyr." Are you then come to slay me? Becket asked of the knights:'I have committed my cause to the great Judge of all mankind wherefore I am not moved by threats, nor are your swords more ready to strike than is my

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soul for martyrdom. 'Finally after a bitter exchange of insults, they murdered him leaving his body, bespattered with blood and brains, as though pavement, while his soul rested in Abraham's bosom.'"(Great leaders of the Christian Church, p152)Becket's death was a regretted death for the Englishmen and the royal power started to decline being forced to approve the church law again. His regrets came too late..." barefoot and clad in woolen garments walked to the tomb of the blessed martyr his tender feet being cut by the hard stones, a great quantity of blood flowed from them to the ground. When he arrived at the tomb it was a holy thing to see the affliction which he suffered with sobs and tears, and the discipline to which he submitted from the hands of bishops and a great number of priests and monks." Thomas Becket was considered a saint and his tomb is now a place of pilgrimage.

## 2. The role of religion in England

### **2. 1 Reformation**

The reformation has been the greatest struggle from religion history. The effervescence started in Europe. Across Europe there were fears that the Protestant Church would become corrupt. The man who brought new hopes but also fears for the Church was not a king or a pope, but a simple monk named Martin Luther. The Indulgences," tickets" which granted the salvation and a way to get to heaven or to save the loved ones who were in purgatory were created in order to get money from the commoners, for the Pope wanted to build the St. Peter Basilica, a huge construction which needed financial support. " The moment the money tinkles in the collecting box, a soul flies out of purgatory". (Chadwick, 43)He wrote Ninety-five Theses against Indulgences which was thought to mislead simple souls. He

suggested that God couldn't be impressed by external facts, by payments, or other good works. In fact his work aimed the Pope, who even if he was the most rich man in the Europe, his greed pushed him to fool people by introducing the Indulgences in order to build St. Peter. The word of God revealed him that the Pope wasn't the supreme head of Europe, but God and he tried to preserve the truth and purifying the Catholic Church. He was found guilty of heresy because he dared to question Pope's authority, so he is excommunicated on 3rd January 1521, but in Germany the people started to believe Luther and many of them followed him, as he later built the Lutheran Church with thousands of adepts. Till the Reformation the religious services and the Bible were in Latin. This language was well understood only by the upper class, the nobles who had access to education, while the commoners couldn't understand a word from Latin. In 1534 Martin Luther was the one who translated New Testament into German so that everyone could have access to the Bible. Finding the truth and fighting for people's soul was severely punished by the Catholic Church, because money was ruling in fact, God was absent in their opinion, His name was used in order to scare people that after death God will send them to hell. It was said that the Reformation was, a royal reformation, but the truth is that The Work of Scripture was the basic motive which led to reformation. Having a personal and unconditional relationship with God was the desire of most of the people, without a mediator who could forgive one's sins. Even paid, the sins would follow the sinner for he had not been sincere to receive liberation from God. The pope began to become a sort of God for the most people-and He was receiving the credits for spiritual work. The Reformation meant a new restoration-the Gospel restoration, which was necessary and a true religious

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guide. But in England, things were different. In 1529, Henry the 8th breaks from the Roman Catholic Church because the Pope wouldn't grant him the divorce. While Martin Luther was concerned about reforming the church and the religion, Henry created a Reformation to fulfill his personal needs, to have an heir, a son. William Tyndale a great character in history printed the first English version of the New Testament at Worms in 1525 but he was strangled and burnt near Brussels in 1536. The king of England was married to Catherine of Aragorn, the daughter of Isabel of Castillo and Ferdinand II of Aragorn, the most powerful kings in Spain. Catherine couldn't give Henry a son, she gave birth to a daughter named Mary, and the rest of the children she gave birth, had died in infancy. Henry was very upset, for he wanted a boy, not a girl. The monarch started to meet another woman, Anne Boleyn. Her beauty attracted Henry, but the problem was that he was still married to his former wife, Catherine, and the fair lady refused to have closer connections with Henry till he got separated from his wife. The king went to Pope Clement VII, and asked him to give him the divorce, but the Pope was afraid of both Henry and Charles V, the holy roman emperor, because Catherine was related to the roman emperor who was the most powerful man in Europe. So he chooses to postpone his request, because the catholic doctrine forbade divorce between husband and wife and of course, he was a weak person. In 1529, Henry VIII passes the Act of Supremacy, and made himself the head of the Church, and everyone had to recognize him as the head of the Church. Having the power of a pope, he granted himself the divorce creating the Reformation of England. Thomas More, a very important politician, the prime-minister of England refused to recognize the king's second marriage. So the king was having some problems, for he was thinking <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-politics-in-great-britain-history-essay/>

that if an important politician such as More did not recognize his marriage, the others will do the same thing. Thomas More refused to recognize Henry as the head of the church, being a devoted Catholic, loyal to the Pope, to the Church and to God, who-in his opinion, was the only supreme ruler above all. His ignorance cost him a lot, he ended by being executed. The pope made him a saint, a martyr for he was the only one who stood up against Henry and the Reformation in England. But it seems that God didn't want to hear Henry's prayer-to have a son, because Anne couldn't give him a son, but a girl-Elizabeth I. He fell in love with Jane Seymour, but in order to get rid of his wife, his cruelty went beyond humanity-he accused her of cheating him and executed her. Obsessed with the idea of having a son, he didn't care he left his child orphan, but he sought a woman who could bear his son. Finally, Jane Seymour gave birth to a boy-Edward VI, but she paid a great price for the child- her own life...After Henry's death, Edward who was only ten years old, ruled under the Protector Somerset giving free hand to the Protestants. The doctrine of Protestants started to be taught and through the Act of February 1549 the clergy was allowed to get married. The reformers wanted to abolish Latin mass and to substitute a liturgy in the vernacular. Once with the Act of Uniformity a new Liturgy was created (The Prayer Book of 1549) which became the legal form of worship. This prayer Book contained German protestant orders; the principles of Luther, the people must turn from spectators in the church into active participants, to have a private relationship with God.

## **2. 1. 1 Queen Mary I**

In 1553 England was a Protestant country under Queen Mary I. She was often treated as a bastard by her father and during the reign of her step brother Edward she was persecuted because of her desire to keep the mass. She grew with such a great love for Rome, becoming fanatical. She tried to restore Catholic faith in England, ejecting 2000 clerics who had married, imprisoning many people because they opposed the restoration of the Latin mass. She ignored the laws that Edward established about the lands and the rights of the clergy, she even wanted to restore the power of the Pope. Mary burnt almost 300 hundred people of all kind, rich, poor, noble or ordinary considered Protestant heretics, gaining the nickname ' Bloody Mary'. The Reformation had political consequences everywhere but in England the political motive was entangled with the reforming ideas. By 1558 Protestantism had struck roots into the country that was evident from the martyrs under Mary and the attitude of London towards them.(Chadwick, 135)Before Mary I no other woman had worn the crown of England. She obtained the throne despite all the difficulties, keeping the line of succession in dynasty and established a precedent for the coronation of a woman. Until recently, Mary was the least known of the Tudor dynasty, especially eclipsed by her half-sister, Elizabeth. In addition, she was convicted as one of the cruelest women in history. " The Bloody Mary" is seen as a bigot tyrant whose reign was an absolute failure, remarkable only by the burning of more than 300 Protestant and the unpopular marriage to Philip of Spain. Queen Mary shouldn't have become a queen, her father, Henry VIII, tried hard to do so as not to gain the throne. He admitted finally the right to the throne of his daughter, but his son Edward ignored the father's will: being determined to <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-politics-in-great-britain-history-essay/>

preserve and defend the English Protestantism, he removed her sister from Catholic succession. After Edward's death in July 1533, Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed queen, but 10 days later Mary was able to seize the throne. This achievement is often overlooked. Mary led the only successful revolt against the central government in England of the sixteenth century and was the only Tudor monarch except Henry VII, the founder of the dynasty, who had to fight for the throne. But in spite the triumphant ascension, her status as the first Queen of England has been the subject of speculation and doubt. Mary questioned herself whether a woman could wear the crown. The Language, image and expectations of the English monarchy were predominantly male. In the first months, the Queen's practices and powers have been elaborated. The status of the reigning queens was defined in a special law passed by the Parliament in April 1554, where a woman's reign became equal to the reign of a man. Thus, in what concerned the statute, ceremony and ritual, Mary took all the formalities of the court and reign and adapted them in a suitable way for a woman. Back then, there was no guide for a woman's crowning as the sole sovereign, but the coronation of Mary has invested it with the strength of her ancestors exercised without exception. She resumed the traditional habit of reaching patients who were suffering of scrofula (the belief that the touch of a monarch was healing) to develop this theme: Marc Bloch - Kings Thaumaturgies) or poor foot-washing. These rituals had never been performed by a woman and were considered priestly acts that only God's representatives on earth - male monarch - could do. The English monarchy and not only the monarch's personality were the key determining and executing policy. From this point of view, Mary's regime was not much different - her personality played an important role. She was involved in all

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governance issues and policies of the State - marriage, reunion with Rome, the war with France. Her marriage with Philip of Spain proved to be disastrous for England, for she couldn't have an heir-the only solution to turn England into a Catholic country and she lost Calais, the last English territory in France owned until 1558. No one wanted England to be dragged into the Mediterranean political arena and to become a tool in the hands of Spain. The problem which lay in the path of reconciliation was a financial one. J. R. H. Moorman, argues in his book-(A history of the church in England, p. 194) that Reginald Pole was a great favorite of Henry VIII till he divorced, but since 1532 he had been living abroad and couldn't understand the situation in England, he could neither accept the policy of Henry and wrote a book about the unity of the Church which the king regarded as a personal insult. In 1542, when Pole was ordained as cardinal, Henry revenged and executed Pole's mother and brother as traitors. But being dead, Henry did not represent a threat anymore. Reginald Pole was confident that if Mary was now queen having Philip; a truly orthodox by her side, he could return to England with full legatine authority. Pole reached England in 1554 and in the same year the Parliament passed two acts, each designed to reconcile with Rome. The first one revived the old laws against heresy and so made resistance to the ecclesiastical policy of the State far more difficult and costly. (Gee and Hardy, Documents, p. 384). The second one an Act of Repeal annulled all ecclesiastical legislation since 1528, with one exception ♦" the dissolution of the monasteries.(Ibid, pp. 385-415). A deal was thus struck with the papacy. The English Parliament agreed to follow all the steps which it had taken into the last thirty years, but only with the condition that the property of its members and other laymen remained untouched. The act <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-politics-in-great-britain-history-essay/>

was describing the coming of cardinal Pole 'to call us home again into the right way from whence we have all this long while wandered and strayed abroad', but this act was in fact a great transaction of money intended to guard vested interests. It pleased the Pope and on November 30 the cardinal graciously absolved the realm from its long-continued schism.

## **2. 1. 2 Elizabeth I**

After the death of her half-sister, Mary, Elizabeth ruled the kingdom in such a manner that the most historians considered, "the golden age". She is going to reign from 1558 till 1603 and put her stamp on the English history.

Elizabeth gets the name of "The Virgin Queen" because she never gets married: "I'm married to England". The Catholics hated her because she was the illegitimate daughter of Henry and above all she was a Protestant. She affectively oversized the development of Protestantism during her reign. The state of the country was disastrous, people were not too confident in the new feminine figure, Elizabeth I. Through the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity in 1559, the jurisdiction in England by any foreign prince, person, prelate was abolished and a new oath was imposed upon all ecclesiastical and lay officials-Elizabeth became the supreme governor of both the Church and State. The Act of Uniformity included new orders dealing with clerical dress, kneeling during the prayers, worshiping the name of Jesus Christ, enforcing the preaching and catechizing. The injunctions forbade any priest or deacon to marry until the chosen lady was interviewed and approved by the bishop and the two Justices of the Peace. Most of the laity was against the Elizabethan Settlement especially in the north and north-west. The altars, images, ornaments and books reintroduced by Mary were all now

forbidden and burnt. Elizabeth met a mild opposition with her new reform, but her main purpose was to fill the vacant sees with bishops, clergy and laity, thing which she managed to achieve. The pressure from outside England forced the Roman Catholic to become subjects of a foreign and hostile power. The attitude of the Pope towards Elizabeth, the Jesuit mission, Spanish interferences and the intrigues of Mary Queen of Scots were the main motives which threatened the safety of the queen and the security of the throne, thus the government became more severe against such as appeared to be implicated in them. J. R. H. Moorman, (p. 204)claims that once with the visitation of 1559 all the Marian bishops had been deprived of their sees and the majority was imprisoned. Justice was at place of honor-if they were found intriguing with the ambassador of Spain, they were punished severely; the oath had to be respected. The visitation led to the dissolution of some monasteries and religious houses which were refunded during Mary's reign, Elizabeth couldn't allow the policy of her half-sister to persist further because it was too dangerous, thus the monasticism was abolished from the Church in England. Among the dissolute monasteries were also Westminster Abbey, the nuns at Syon, and two houses of friars in London. The events which were taking place in England were closely followed at Rome. Pope Pius IV tried to convert the queen of England, so he sent his envoys to London, but his mission was failure. The head of Rome tried to ask for the help of Philip of Spain who was the natural protector of the papists in his country but he refused, he did not want to interfere in English" domestic affairs" In 1566, once with the ascension of the pope, he started to claim that the will of the Church of Rome should be enforced. So he began to think about a solution in order to humiliate the proud young

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woman ruler of England. The right hand of Pius IV, was Mary queen of Scots, who fled into England and tried to make people believe that it was her who had the right to be the queen of England, not Elizabeth, for she was the descendent of Henry VII, while Elizabeth was the daughter of Anne Boleyn whose marriage with Henry VIII, was never approved by the Church. Within a few months Mary gave the dissidents a new hope. In November 1569, the Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland raised a rebellion, to get rid of Elizabeth and restore "the true catholic religion". "The rebels entered the Durham Cathedral where a Roman Mass was said and the English Prayer Book was trodden foot. But in spite of some help from Rome, the Northern Rebellion was quickly suppressed and with great severity" (Moorman, p. 205)