

Was england a  
catholic or protestant  
country by january  
1547? download this  
essay...



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BUSTER**

It can be argued whether England was Catholic or Protestant at the beginning of 1547 because it seemed Henry made contradicting church reforms himself. Personally at his death I believe Henry's religious grounding was with the Catholics yet he left his country and heir to becoming mainly Protestant. However, this is debatable due to the Chantries Act and Protestant Council of Regency both being established within a year of each other.

Sweeping reforms were made to the church through from 1530, therefore to answer the question it is necessary to focus on those made much closer to the date. Firstly, the Act of Ten Articles in 1536 represents a firm distinction of Protestantism in England due to the fact it rejected one of the most important aspects of Catholicism, four of the Seven Sacraments. If England were to be Catholic it would need an advertisement of these and not a degradation of its key belief.

As a consequence 1536 shows us the Protestant twist in the beliefs of many. However in the Bishops book of 1537 the Bishop flips between the two religions, claiming that the four sacraments were rediscovered just of a lesser value. Ironically, two years later the Act of Six Articles confirmed Transubstantiation and private masses, again rebuilding catholic ideas after it's come down of 1536, but was the Act simply passed to secure the country against an attack?

Yet the same year that the Act of Six Articles was passed the " Matthew Bible" obviously Protestant had been given the king's permission. It was

bizarre that Catholic and Protestant views were spread to the subjects by the king within a month.

1538 once again saw opposing acts of religion. On the one hand Cromwell (distinctly Protestant) recognised Protestants by placing English bibles in all parishes, removing relics and discouraging pilgrimages. All of these gave a clear message that Protestantism was in control, but that same year Henry executed John Lambert for his rejection of transubstantiation. Maybe this move was to subtly warn Cromwell to inhibit his actions of Protestantism and to adhere to the Catholics yet again and that Henry VIII was in fact moving back to his Roman Catholic roots.

In spite of this, it may be that at this time, 1538, England was Protestant like Cromwell. Paul III excommunicated Henry from the church due to the execution of John Lambert. It would seem the church was frowning upon Catholics and saw what Henry did as wrong and that Lambert was in fact right in what he said about the Eucharist, hence Paul was reverting to Protestant ruling by banning Henry.

Moving on from 1538, 1539 saw the previously mentioned Act of Six Articles, confirming that England was Catholic however in addition to this the closure of all monasteries enhanced the opinion of Protestantism.

It was in 1540 things become even more as controversial. Henry began the year by marrying the sister of a Protestant Duke, showing that he accepted the religion into the Royal family, but then the execution of Protestant Cromwell definitely shows his roots of Catholicism.

Cromwell had rediscovered the Protestant religion for England. He had made most of the changes for England into Protestantism and therefore his execution shows the fine line between the two religions for Henry, Henry being Catholic and finally defining his true belief. I think Cromwell originally set out to help Henry obtain a divorce but through this led to becoming a Protestant.

Later that year Henry's divorce to Anne and marriage to the daughter of a Catholic Duke pronounced the Catholic religion and set fire to the Protestants. It would seem the King was Catholic, yet the country would remain Protestant. All the monasteries had been closed and the presence of English bibles in churches spread the word of the Protestants. It would be even more so, due to the fact the Pope in Rome no longer controlled the church as Catholic since it was under Henry, as in the Act of Supremacy. Yet Henry cared little after he got his divorce and so in other words the church was set free.

Still approaching 1547, in 1543 England was slowly turning back to being Catholic. Henry made several changes that indicated this. Firstly, the Act for the Advancement of True Religion began once again restricting English bibles to the upper classes only. The lower classes tended more to rely on religion and therefore this act would be most relevant for them because their bibles were taken away.

This development was highlighted by The King's Book a publication written by the king defending the Catholics. Confusing us a few years ago was the king's religion, now clearly confirmed as Catholic.

However the controversy over what state England was in still remained. I have discussed both ways and in 1544 there was no denying Henry was making England Protestant. I say this mainly because he was making his son a Protestant and in the foreseeable future he would be king, consequently placing his protestant views over his people. The new king would be well-respected and therefore his beliefs criticised. Henry would not have given his son a Protestant tutor if he did not think it would do the country good to have a king of the same.

And so it seems in the fast approaching year of 1547 Henry was turning his country Protestant while himself remaining Catholic. He passed the Chantries Act in 1545 and assured again a new Protestant king by heavily naming Protestant Council of Regency for his heir in 1546.

To conclude, in my opinion in January 1547 England was a Protestant country. It had no monasteries, no chantries and the Seven Sacraments had been suppressed. In addition in the next few years England would be receiving a Protestant-taught king. However England had a Catholic King.

Before he died three new monasteries were built to pray for Henry's soul. This shows his belief. Yet in 1547 it was obvious due to his execution of Cromwell and The King's Book. I think that what turned into just wanting a divorce for Henry cascaded into changing the structure of the church to get it.

He never directly claimed to be Protestant and always set his ways to being Catholic. Even if he changed to Protestant in the beginning to get an

annulment he changed back to Catholic. Saying this, he still had Protestant twists in him. For example he did not like relics or images.

This meant that he left England behind still being Protestant. I think that he thought if he left his heir Protestant then he would get on with the country he knew he must have left behind. Even though the king was the most powerful being of England and lay down the law to being catholic the country fell short of achieving it and was in January 1547 Protestant.