

To what extent was
mary i successful in
her attempt essay



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Traditionalists have seen Mary's reign as a failure; they believed that Protestantism was far too embedded and people wouldn't accept Catholicism and the reversal of the Reformation, which was quite popular and strong, would cause a huge disaster. However, the Marian Reformation was, unexpectedly, quite successful. Mary, aided by her cousin Cardinal Pole, brought back Catholic doctrines and rituals, including the Mass, brought back the papal headship and crushed opposition from Protestants.

In spite of this, Mary's inability to produce an heir brought the Protestant Princess Elizabeth came to the throne after her death in November 1558, which ended her Catholic Reformation. Mary's Reformation was quite popular, as there wasn't much opposition towards it. At her accession there was much rejoicing and enthusiasm, this shows that people were happy to have Mary as Queen and accepted her. As many Protestants saw her accession as God's verdict on their failures; most either conformed to the changes or went abroad.

Just four bishops – Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley and Hooper – refused to recognise Catholicism and they were later all burned at stake for this.

Carrying on, Mary's rule shunned strict methods used by other countries to get rid of opposition, e. g. the Jesuits (dedicated Catholic priests who were determined to reverse the Protestant Reformation with papal approval) weren't called to England to help with the restoration, even though they offered to help. There was some opposition, as there was growing persecution of heretics, especially in the south-east, but most of this was destroyed.

Mary couldn't be expected to wipe out all Protestantism as this was unachievable. Every person's religious beliefs, in England, couldn't be monitored and many Protestants could always practice their beliefs in the privacy of their own homes. The reasons why the Marian Reformation was so successful was firstly, Mary acted without too much speed; secondly, she acted with the consent of the Parliament; and thirdly, the regime wasn't revengeful towards the Protestants, especially in its first few years.

Mary took the throne in July 1553 and in October of the same year, Parliament passes a Statute of Repeal, which repealed the Act of Uniformity of the previous year and stated that all administration of sacrament and divine services should be as they had been in the last years of Henry VIII's reign. Many reforming bishops had been arrested before the parliamentary session began; this helped remove possible opposition from the House of Lords. Therefore, the new Uniformity Act was passed easily and quickly.

On the other hand, an effort to impose penalties on those who didn't attend Catholic Church services was overpowered and there was no early return of laws against heresy. The next point in Mary's Catholic Restoration was the return of the papal headship, which was successfully carried through by Mary. Pope Julius III empowered Cardinal Reginald Pole, Mary's cousin, to bring England back to Rome. Pole was a moderate Catholic reformer who believed in the ideas of Cardinal Contarini, who thought that the way to destroy wasn't to engage in war with the heretics but rather not to deserve their criticism.

Pole arrived in England towards the end of 1554, more than a year after Mary's accession. He publicly announced a pardon upon the nation, amongst the enthusiastic and welcoming audience. Therefore, England was brought back to papal obedience after twenty years and it was a triumph for the Marian regime. However the papal headship didn't have complete control, e. g. in 1557, the new and anti-Spanish Pope (Paul IV) stripped Pole of his legateship and demanded that he returned to Rome which he faced charges of heresy.

But Pole ignored this and when the Pope sent a new legate to England Mary refused him entry and she replied that as an Englishman Pole couldn't face charges in Rome. In this sense, Mary had restored the old English Church instead of creating the new papal Church. Another reason, to why the Counter-Reformation was successful was because, on the whole, it wasn't extreme. Even though an index of prohibited books was introduced in 1555 and three years later the Council stated that anyone found in possession of the forbidden books would face the death penalty, few people were prosecuted and many convicted were treated moderately.

Also, the existing Protestant clergy weren't persecuted. Of the twenty six bishops, only seven had been deprived and four of them on the excuse that they were married. Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury was put in the Tower in September 1553 for offering publicly to defend the Mass, as established in the second Edwardian Prayer Book. The four bishops who were killed were Hooper of Gloucester, Latimer of Worcester, Ridley of London and Cranmer himself.

Furthermore, only 25% of the clergy were deprived and the vast majority of such deprivations occurred because the clergy concerned were married, not because of the objection of the Catholic ways. Many got their livings back by putting away their wives. The issue of married clergy was handled moderately by Mary, as once a priest was married, they couldn't become a priest again. Further eagerness for the return of the old order was the reappearance of the ornaments, which had disappeared during Henrician and Edwardian.

Many Catholics had hid them away, in hope of bringing them back in good times, rather than losing them to reformers. The laity seemed to be quite satisfied with the Restoration, which made it successful. However, during Mary's reign, the medieval heresy laws were finally revived and from 1555 were used to track down and execute the Protestants who openly refused to give up their faith and continued to preach and spread Protestant doctrines. Approximately, 224 were burnt at the stake over the next three years and it was the most serious religious persecution in English history.

The burnings were serious and gruesome and there were at least five burnings per month, over a 44 month period. Those burnt were mainly lesser men and were mostly from Norwich and London. Most of England didn't any burnings. The burnings were of laity who were zealous heretics, usually preachers; they had been convicted more than once. Mary was one of the driving forces behind the persecution; however it was also employed by bishops including Bishop Bonner of London.

They believed that a small group of wicked men had led England to Protestantism, in the hopes of misleading the nation, and they had to burn them at stake in order to save the Church from them and other heretics, as the Catholic Church had been teaching for centuries. By 1555, there was powerful Protestant opinion around, especially in London and other parts of the south east and Mary's regime would have been failing its spiritual duty if it turned a blind eye towards it. Only four bishops were executed and none of the victims were of noble or gentry status; there were very few Protestant martyrs from the ruling classes.

Also, obsessive Protestants either conformed or went abroad in exile, waiting for better times than to be persecuted at home. In the last year of Mary's reign, the number of Protestants burnt at stake decreased, this could show that the policy was working and the opposition to Mary's Restoration of Catholicism was decreasing and more people were accepting it. However, this may have also been because the government might not have been convinced by the policy. Also there was no form of opposition or popular protest from Protestants towards the persecution.

The Catholic persecution showed success in the long term. After re-imposing Catholicism, Mary decided to marry Phillip II of Spain; they married in Winchester, in July 1554, a year after Mary's accession. She believed the marriage would strengthen Catholicism. The marriage had brought back England's natural alliance with Spain (a Catholic country), which had formed when Henry VII married his son (Arthur) to Catherine of Aragon. However it fell apart when, later, Henry VIII divorced Catherine after his marriage to her.

The marriage was supposed to give Mary a Catholic heir, which she desperately needed, as, according to the Act of Succession (1543), Mary's heir was the Protestant Princess Elizabeth. With an heir, Mary wouldn't have to worry about the country falling Protestant hands, like it would with Elizabeth, when she died. Mary had been advised that Phillip would have no real power in England. In the marriage treaty they signed, it stated that Phillip was bound to uphold the laws of England and couldn't promote any Spaniards to the English office and couldn't remove the Queen.

Most attractively for the English, any child that Mary and Phillip had would inherit the Spain's Low Countries (Belgium and the Netherlands), as well as England, which would create a great Catholic empire. The main problem with the marriage wasn't that it happened, but that it didn't produce an heir. Philip was only in England for thirteen months and Mary wrongly believed she was pregnant on two occasions. Mary had endured ill health since her parent's divorce and this ruined her chances of having a child. However, the marriage did create opposition towards Mary.

The House of Commons had petitioned against the marriage and Mary had been urged to marry an Englishman. Mary was outraged at this and married Phillip. This led to Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sir James Croft, Sir Peter Carew and Henry Grey (the Duke of Suffolk and Lady Jane Grey's father), with others, plotted an uprising from different parts of the country, to descend upon London to dispose of Mary and replace her with her Protestant half sister Elizabeth. This would ensure the nation's return to Protestantism and the English Church wouldn't be reunited with Rome.

Wyatt used the proposed Spanish marriage as an excuse for the removal of Mary. However, this didn't attract much support as the Spanish weren't hated by the English, yet. The rebellion stages were disastrous and the news of the conspiracy leaked out and Wyatt had no army to help defend. Mary delivered a speech which gathered her army led by the Earl of Pembroke who crushed Wyatt's rebellion. 350 men were convicted but only thirty were executed, including Wyatt himself, as was Henry Grey and his daughter Lady Jane; Elizabeth was imprisoned but later released.

The failure of the so called rebellion showed that the Spanish marriage and the return of Catholicism weren't unpopular, as the uprising was small and not very widespread; its appeal was very limited. Altogether, the Marian Restoration of Catholicism was mostly unchallenged. Mary had restored the country to its traditional Church and most of the nation accepted this. Catholic rituals, doctrines, service and ornaments had returned, as had the papal headship, even though the power of Mary reigned over the Church.

Mary's success also shows the small effect of the Protestant Reformation, which had only happened because of Henry VIII's divorce problem. During Edward's reign they had only been brief and had surrendered to the Marian regime. Opposition only came from the return of the heresy laws and the Spanish marriage used as an excuse to remove Mary in favour of Elizabeth; however these were minor situations and arose from zealous Protestants. However, the people of England seemed to have a lot of respect for the government and unity was large between people, therefore the Church of England was run by the monarch who was aided by a bench of bishops.

Most people agreed with the government's policies, when faced with religious disagreement. Nonetheless, it is very clear that if Mary had lived longer, or had an heir, then the English Church would have remained Catholic for a much longer period and would have been successful, like the most of Mary's reign, despite the loss of Calais to the French. Much Protestantism would have remained but the Protestants would have been powerless and wouldn't have been able to challenge the Catholic Church; most Protestants would have conformed or left England to escape persecution, like most other Protestants.

Protestant rebellions against the Catholic Church weren't popular, as proved with Wyatt's rebellion and the burning at stake of the 224 heretics. The Church was very popular, moderate and traditional which gave it widespread attractiveness. Mary's reign was seen as a triumph; she had easily restored Catholic beliefs and rituals to the English Church and had even brought back the papal headship. Her Catholic Reformation was genuinely popular and had little opposition.