

Societal hierarchy

1. Nobility
2. Gentry
3. Yeomen
4. Tenant farmers
5. Landless/working poor
6. Homeless and beggars

Contemporary belief that women could not rule well

Increasing poverty due to high taxation and poor harvests

Many (especially Catholics) thought she was illegitimate

Problems facing Elizabeth I

The Crown was £300,000 in debt
Ongoing war with France



- Self-confident
- Indecisive
- Protestant
- Unmarried
- 'Virgin Queen'

Monarch → divine right to rule, absolute authority

Parliament → Lords + Commons, advised Elizabeth's government

Privy Council → nobles chosen by Elizabeth to govern country



Religion in England

- Church of England important part of life and preached government's message, people paid 10% tax (tithes) to Church
- England officially Catholic but people heavily divided - Reformation questioned Catholic Church teachings
- Huge tensions between Catholics (supported Pope, majority in North and West), Protestants (no Pope, majority in London and East), Puritans (strict Protestants, found in London)

Elizabeth's religious settlement

- Attempt to quell religious tensions
- Act of Supremacy made Elizabeth Supreme Governor of Church of England, removing power from Catholic Pope, clergy swore oath of allegiance to her
- Act of Uniformity made Protestantism England's official religion, set out rules for Churches, prayer book retained some Catholic traditions as a compromise
- Most ordinary people accepted, 8,000 out of 10,000 priests took Oath of Supremacy, but only 1 bishop - largely successful, 27 new Protestant bishops appointed

QUEEN, GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION, 1558-69

Relations between Mary and Elizabeth

- Casket Letters Affair - letters found allegedly written by Mary which implicate her in husband's murder - ensured Elizabeth's support for James VI rather than Mary
- York Conference (1569) - investigation of possible wrongdoing by Mary, used Casket Letters as evidence

Crucifix Controversy - refused to display Catholic crucifixes in Churches, not challenged by Elizabeth

Vestment Controversy - refused to wear the vestments, 37 priests resigned in 1566



Extent of challenge very small

Puritan challenge to settlement

Wanted a stricter Protestant Church

1/3 nobility and gentry (mostly in North and West) became recusants, refusing to attend Church, powerful threat compared to ordinary people

Political threat posed by Catholic France and Spain, angered by Elizabeth's support for Protestants in France's religious war (1562)



- Catholic Queen of Scotland
- Elizabeth's cousin descended from Henry VIII's sister - no denying her legitimacy
- Elizabeth sent money and troops to Protestant rebels in Scotland, rebellion ended with the Treaty of Edinburgh (1560), Mary had to give up claim to English throne
- 1568 - Escaped prison and fled to England after suspicion of Mary's involvement in husband's death forced her to abdicate

Catholic challenge to settlement

European Catholic Church began 'Counter Reformation' against Protestantism

Pope excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, which encouraged foreign attacks