*This podcast helps you to understand what England was like in 1558; the year Elizabeth became Queen.*

England in 1558 had a population of around three million. Although there were towns (the biggest being the capital London), most people lived in the countryside and worked on the land, either to make a living or feed their families, or both. The only important industry was the manufacture and export of woollen cloth. During the sixteenth century prices of goods, especially food, had increased; although some people had done well out of this, the number of poor was growing.

Society was based on clear social classes where everyone knew their place, and had to keep to it. This structure is called hierarchical. God was at the top, then the monarch and so on down to the bottom class of labourers, the poor and unemployed. Everyone was expected to obey and perform services for the class above and to have some responsibility for those below. This structure was based on the ownership of land so the people who owned wealthy landed estates, like nobles, would be at the top.

Most people believed the monarch was chosen by God to govern the country. They were expected to keep their people safe and to make sure the country was peaceful, law-abiding and prosperous. They might have to declare war to defend their country’s interests. Monarchs did not do all this on their own. They were helped by powerful people like the nobles and gentry who came from the top social classes. The monarch chose the Privy Council, a group of close advisers who helped to make all the important decisions. The monarch could also call meetings of Parliament when laws needed passing or taxes approving. They also appointed Justices of the Peace to help them keep law and order throughout the country.

Life expectancy in 1558 was about thirty years. Ordinary people worried about plagues and epidemics, particularly flu, and about harvests failing because of bad weather. Poor harvests would mean even higher food prices and even starvation. Religion was also very important in people’s lives. People believed their religious faith and how they lived their lives would decide if they went to heaven or hell when they died. The local church played a big part in people’s lives and was at the centre of village life. In 1558 England was a Catholic country under the authority of the Pope but from 1547 to 1553 it had been Protestant and the people were now divided by religion; between the Catholics, the Protestants and the more extreme Protestants known as Puritans. In the three reigns before Elizabeth’s there had been rebellions and religion had been one of the causes.

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*This podcast helps you to understand Elizabeth I; what she was like when she became Queen and what her people thought of her and expected from her.*

Elizabeth was the youngest daughter of Henry VIII and it was not expected that she would become queen. However, both her half-brother Edward VI and half-sister Mary Tudor each ruled briefly, for about five years. As neither had any children the throne passed to Elizabeth. Not everyone thought that she had the right to become Queen however. Her father, Henry VIII, had broken away from the authority of the Pope and made himself the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church in England, so he could divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry then married Anne Boleyn and they had a daughter, Elizabeth. There were many Catholics who believed that this divorce was illegal and that Elizabeth was illegitimate and therefore barred from inheriting the English throne. In their eyes the rightful queen was Elizabeth’s closest relative, her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots.

England in the sixteenth century was a male-dominated society and it was highly unusual for a woman to make decisions and to be in charge of men. Monarchs were expected to keep their nobles under control, to make harsh decisions, to declare war and lead their armies into battle. Women were considered too weak to do this. When Elizabeth became queen in 1558 her single status was not a problem, as it was expected that she would soon marry and for the next twenty years there was no shortage of suitors. By the time it was clear Elizabeth would not marry, she had proved she could govern on her own and so the legend of the Virgin Queen, married to her country, began.

Elizabeth was two when her mother was executed and 25 years old when she inherited the throne. She had been brought up as a Protestant and educated by some of the best scholars in the land. Her childhood had not been easy; most of it had been spent in stately homes away from the court, with her own staff. Elizabeth had not seen much of her father when he was king. During the reign of her Catholic half-sister, Mary, she was imprisoned in the Tower of London and accused of being involved in a Protestant rebellion against her. English people knew very little about Elizabeth when she became queen, except for her religion, but it would not be difficult to believe that Elizabeth was a clever and independent woman. Many of her early moves in 1558 also showed much of the forcefulness and political skills of her father.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the problems facing Elizabeth in 1588 and which was the most important.*

**Questioner:** There were many problems facing Elizabeth in 1588 and she had to make important decisions quickly. The country was at war with France and divided by religion. The monarchy was in debt and needed to decide which councillors to keep, sack or appoint. The population was increasing, prices were going up and the number of poor people was growing. In addition, many of her subjects did not think Elizabeth should be queen, and others were waiting to see who she married. Which do you think was the greatest problem facing Elizabeth?

**Student 1:** Although these were all serious problems there were some which Elizabeth couldn’t do anything about straightaway. Rising population, food prices and the increase in poverty were outside the control of sixteenth-century monarchs so initially Elizabeth would just have to keep an eye on the situation. Similarly, she could introduce policies to reduce the royal debt, like selling crown lands, but that was going to take time.

**Student 2:** I agree, and although choosing a new Privy Council had to be handled tactfully, this was a problem which Elizabeth could solve pretty quickly. She appointed a new council of about twenty, keeping some of Edward’s and Mary’s experienced councillors, but also bringing in some of her closest advisers, many of whom were Protestant. The key appointment was making Sir William Cecil her Secretary of State.

**Student 1:** So that leaves religious divisions and war with France. Well, obviously a war with the threat of invasion, was the greatest problem, especially as Elizabeth’s heir, Mary, Queen of Scots, had close links with France and there was a French army on the Scottish border. Speaking of heirs - wasn’t it a problem that Elizabeth was unmarried and didn’t have any children to succeed her?

**Student 2:** Yes, you’re right about that, but not about the war with France because Elizabeth quickly ended that by signing the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, although it cost her Calais. But I think the greatest problem was religion. People’s beliefs were so important to them that although Elizabeth tried to find a settlement that was acceptable to most, there were bound to be some Catholics and Protestants, especially extreme Protestants called Puritans, who opposed it.

**Questioner:** Have we come to the right conclusion then?

**Student 1:** Well as soon as Elizabeth had appointed her Council she moved more quickly to deal with the war and religion than she did to find a husband, showing her priorities, but I think I would go with religion too. Even after the Protestant settlement of 1559, religious divisions in England continued and there was now the increased possibility of either a rebellion or invasion by Catholics to replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots.

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*This podcast helps you to understand why there were religious divisions in England in 1558.*

England had been a Catholic country for centuries until Henry VIII in 1534 broke away from the authority of the Pope and established himself as Head of the English Church. Under Henry’s son, Edward VI, the Church of England became strongly Protestant. In 1549 Catholics in Devon and Cornwall rebelled. In 1553 the new Queen, Mary Tudor, restored the Catholic religion. Many Protestants could not accept the Catholic Church. Mary burnt over 300 ‘martyrs’ who refused to change their beliefs. In 1558 England was a Catholic country again but an increasing number of people, including Elizabeth herself, were Protestant and this division was causing unrest and rebellion.

Protestants were still Christians but they did not accept the authority of the Pope and some Catholic beliefs. There were also some extreme Protestants known as Puritans who wanted an even simpler Church. Each group believed that they were right and only their religion would enable them to go to Heaven after death. Catholics and Protestants were divided over the organisation and appearance of the Church, and its services.

Catholics wanted to keep the Pope in Rome as Head of the Church, with a hierarchy of cardinals, archbishops and bishops to help him run it. Catholics preferred churches which were very ornate and filled with stained-glass windows, statues and pictures all dominated by huge altars and organs. The Catholics preferred the clergy to wear richly decorated robes. They wanted the priest to read the services in Latin and they believed that a miracle took place during the Mass when the bread and wine were turned into the body and blood of Jesus.

Protestants wanted the monarch as Head of the Church instead of the Pope, but keeping archbishops and bishops to run the Church. Puritans believed however that the Church should be governed by committees elected by the congregation. Protestants did not like having too many images while Puritans only wanted plain white-washed churches. Protestants thought richly decorated robes were too Catholic and preferred their clergy to wear a loose white garment called a surplice, introduced in the reign of Edward VI, for most services. The Puritans, however, wanted ministers to wear plain black ‘Genevan’ gowns. Protestants wanted the Bible and services in English, and Mass replaced with Holy Communion. They believed the bread and wine in the Communion service remained bread and wine, but were also the body and blood of Jesus, while Puritans believed that Jesus was spiritually, but not physically, present.

These differences might seem minor to us, but religious beliefs were incredibly important to people in the sixteenth century and some were prepared to die for them. Although most people in 1558 would still have been Catholic, the universities, people in the south-east, many of the politically powerful classes and of course, the new Queen herself, were all Protestant.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the details of Elizabeth’s Religious Settlement of 1559 and the impact it had on a country divided by religion.*

The two monarchs before Elizabeth had changed the religion of England to match their beliefs and it was expected that the new Protestant Queen would not want the English Church to remain Catholic. Elizabeth made a religious settlement her main priority in 1558 and moved quickly with her Council but the country’s religion was a very complex problem. Elizabeth knew that the majority of English people were Catholic and liked tradition but the burning of Protestants in Mary’s reign had made the foreign Pope very unpopular. As a committed Protestant who had appointed a largely Protestant Council, Elizabeth could not accept Catholic doctrine or beliefs or the Pope as Head of the Church. However, she was far more politically aware than Mary and knew any settlement needed to be acceptable to most of her subjects. She also knew that the most powerful countries in Europe and her heir Mary, Queen of Scots, were Catholic and that her decision would have an impact there too.

In February 1559, after some opposition from bishops in the House of Lords, Parliament passed the Elizabethan Religious Settlement. It consisted of two acts. The Act of Supremacy said that Elizabeth and not the Pope was now Head of the Church in England although her title was actually Supreme Governor, and that all clergy and office holders had to swear an oath of loyalty accepting this title. The Act of Uniformity said that services were to be held in English using a new Prayer Book which included the Communion Service rather than Catholic Mass. Ornaments and decorations were still allowed in churches, as was the singing of hymns. Clergy could still wear religious gowns but were now allowed to marry.

The settlement of 1559 was a compromise. Although it reflected many of Elizabeth’s personal beliefs her main aim was to unite the country. She did not want religious beliefs to lead to rebellion or to punish people for what they believed. The immediate impact of the settlement was encouraging, most people still attended Church every Sunday and there were no major protests. Catholics could accept the title Supreme Governor, telling themselves the Pope was still the real Head, and because the Church still looked the same people could go along each Sunday as usual, although a minority refused to attend, the recusants. Underneath however there were tensions. The omission of the Latin Mass was unacceptable to Catholics. Many of them got round this by taking Mass secretly while waiting to see what the Pope directed them to do about the new Church. For many Protestants of course, especially the Puritans, although the new services were now Protestant, the Church itself looked far too Catholic.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the role played by the Church of England in early Elizabethan society.*

Religious beliefs were incredibly important to people in the sixteenth century. Most people went to Church every Sunday and all the important rituals of their lives were linked to the Church, including baptisms, marriage, holy days and festivals. The Church was the centre of community life and supported the people through hardship. It also gave them hope, not only during this life, but also by teaching that leading a good life would ensure eternal salvation.

When the Religious Settlement of 1559 was passed by Parliament, Elizabeth recognised that it would take time to win everyone’s loyalty to the new Church of England. Therefore, she worked hard to establish the Church in the people’s affections. The Church’s role in society remained central. Elizabeth’s subjects still went to Church every Sunday to save their mortal souls and looked to the Church for moral guidance, help in times of poverty, some basic schooling for their children and lots of village feasts and holy days. After 1559, Elizabeth and her government made it clear that loyalty to the Queen required loyalty to her Church. Elizabeth won support for the new Church by describing herself as the saviour of Protestantism. She used biblical sayings and portraits of herself to show that she was the restorer of the true religion, bringing an age of harmony and progress after the chaos of Mary’s reign.

The government made attendance at Church a test of loyalty to the crown and country. Recusants (anyone who refused to go to church) had to pay a fine of 1 shilling a week. This was a large amount for the poor but not the rich. However, the authorities often turned a blind eye if the fines for recusancy were not collected and at first ignored the fact that some Catholics heard Mass secretly after attending the new Church. All clergy had to be licensed by the government who told them what to say in their sermons. Every Sunday when they went to Church the people would say prayers for the Queen’s safety and thanks for the blessings of her reign. The Queen’s Accession day was added to the calendar of Church festivals so that a day of feasting, drinking and having fun would be associated with the Queen, while the manufacture of medallions and engravings showing images of the Queen became popular, even replacing those of the Virgin Mary.

For the people, the role of the Church in society was not just religious. It was also the focus of village life and provided welfare and education. For the government too, the Church’s role was not just religious. It was also a means of promoting the status and authority of the Queen and ensuring national unity and even obedience.

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*This podcast helps you to understand why and how Elizabethan Puritans challenged the Settlement of 1559.*

**Questioner:** Hello my name’s Joanna Johnson and I want to welcome you to everyone’s favourite gameshow *List of Three,* where the contestant has to list three facts about a period in time. This week we are looking at religion in Early Elizabethan England. Let’s start the clock.

The Puritans did not like everything about the new Church of England introduced by Elizabeth in 1559. Can you list three things about the running of the new Church that Puritans wanted to change?

**Student:** They wanted to get rid of any sort of Head of the Church; to remove archbishops and bishops and to run the Church through committees elected by the Congregation.

**Questioner:** Correct! Question 2: Can you list three things about the appearance of the new Church that Puritans didn’t like?

**Student:** Stained glass windows, statues and ornate altars.

**Questioner:** Correct! Question 3: Can you list three things the Puritans did not like about the new Church services?

**Student:** The clergy wore white surplices for most services and sometimes ornate ceremonial gowns. Hymns were still sung and the Communion Service still talked about the body and blood of Christ. These were all too Catholic for Puritans.

**Questioner:** That’s right! Question 4: Can you list three things that the Puritans felt were an improvement on the Church before 1559?

**Student:** The Pope was no longer Head of the Church, services and the Bible were in English, not Latin and the services were Protestant, not Catholic.

**Questioner:** Correct! Question 5: Can you list the three areas where the Puritans challenged Elizabeth’s Religious Settlement after 1559?

**Student:** The Church, the Council and Parliament.

**Questioner:** That’s right! Now, Question 6: After some Puritans accepted posts as bishops in Elizabeth’s new Church can you list three changes that they pressurised Elizabeth to make?

**Student:** The abolition ofholy days, the removal of using the sign of the cross, and, above all, changing to plain black gowns.

**Questioner:** Correct! Question 7: Can you give three reasons why Elizabeth refused to make any changes to her Church?

**Student:** She believed that the Religious Settlement was final and that her bishops should show loyalty. She saw even small changes as a challenge to her authority.

**Questioner:** Correct again. Now can you give three reasons why Puritans had a lot of political influence?

**Student:** Some were MPs in the House of Commons and some, like the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, were members of the Queen’s Council. This gave them opportunities to put forward their case, but again Elizabeth refused to alter the Settlement.

**Questioner:** That’s right! Now, Question 9: Can you list the three groups the Puritans split into, which weakened their challenge?

**Student:** The Moderates, who wanted small changes such as clergy wearing simple robes; the Presbyterians, who wanted to get rid of bishops; and the Separatists, who wanted to get rid of a national Church completely.

**Questioner:** Correct! Finally, can you give three reasons to explain why the Puritans were less of a threat than the Catholics?

**Student:** They did not lead rebellions or violent protests or try to help a foreign power invade England or want to replace Elizabeth.

**Questioner:** Congratulations you scored 10 out of 10 on that round. Thanks for joining us and see you again for another *List of Three.*

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*This podcast helps you to understand the reaction of the different groups of Catholics, both at home and abroad, to the Religious Settlement between 1559 and 1568.*

The majority of people in 1559, certainly away from London and the south-east, were still Catholic. In the North especially, most of the powerful noble families were Catholic. Despite this, there was no mass opposition to the Religious Settlement during the first decade. There was much about the Settlement that was acceptable to most Catholics; the title Supreme Governor rather than Head, the presence of bishops with their ornate gowns and familiar church interiors, and relatively light penalties. As a result, even the great majority of the clergy took the Oath of Supremacy to Elizabeth. However, there was no Catholic Mass as part of the services. For Catholics this meant that their personal salvation, their chance of going to heaven, was at risk.

Nobody knew in 1558 how long this Religious Settlement would last. English Catholics attended the new church services on Sundays, although some also went to Mass said by a priest, in secret, at a local house. However some Catholics, known as recusants, refused to attend the new Church. Many of this group regarded Elizabeth as illegitimate but at first they worked quietly. Some of these priests became chaplains to the Catholic nobles and gentry, celebrating mass in their houses, while others established secret meeting places where their former parishioners could hear Mass.

The attitude of the Papacy was vital for influencing the actions of European Catholic rulers as well as Catholics in England but the Pope, Pius IV, took no action, perhaps hoping that Elizabeth could be persuaded to change her mind. When a new Pope did finally excommunicate the Queen in 1570, eleven years had passed and it was too late to be effective. There was no support for rebellion either from France or Spain, the two powerful Catholic nations. England was still an ally of Spain in 1559. In any case, Philip had no wish to lead a religious Crusade against England, as he did not want to replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots, who had strong ties with France – Spain’s traditional enemy. France, meanwhile, was involved in its own religious civil war from 1562, which would occupy it for the next thirty-five years.

Elizabeth and her officials knew that Catholics were not attending church but preferred to ‘turn a blind eye’. Penalties were not strictly enforced because the Queen told her bishops that she did not want anyone to be vigorously examined over their religious beliefs. In addition, in the 1560s she re-introduced some Catholic practices, for example, Requiem Mass for the souls of the dead.

For the first decade, therefore, Elizabeth showed great leniency towards Catholics as long as they were outwardly loyal to her and attended the new Church, which most did.

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*This podcast helps you to understand why Mary, Queen of Scots was such a problem to Elizabeth I.*

As long as Elizabeth remained childless, her heir was her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots. This might not have been a problem except for one very important issue – the cousins were divided by religion. Elizabeth was Protestant. Mary was Catholic.

Mary also had strong links with France. As a young girl she was married to Francis, the son of the French king, and lived in France. In her absence from Scotland, the country was ruled by her French mother-in-law, Mary of Guise. Scotland was a Catholic country but, in 1559, Scottish Protestant nobles took control of the government from Mary of Guise. France threatened to invade Scotland but then Elizabeth sent her own army to Scotland and the French backed down. Scotland was now a Protestant country, ruled by Protestant lords. In 1561 Mary’s husband and now King of France, Francis, died and she returned to Scotland, although she still had strong links to France. In Scotland she had to get used to a new situation – she was a Catholic monarch of a Protestant country where she had no power.

Mary’s return to Scotland and marriage and birth of a son, James, increased her claim to the English throne, as Elizabeth was still unmarried and childless. In addition, some Catholics in England, as well as abroad, believed it was Mary who should be Queen of England. These Catholics believed that Elizabeth was illegitimate. For the first ten years of her reign such Catholics had not openly opposed Elizabeth or her Protestant Religious Settlement but many were biding their time, waiting for the opportunity, perhaps with support from powerful European Catholic countries and the Pope, to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary.

In 1568 when the Protestant Lords turned against Mary she fled to England and asked Elizabeth to help her to get back the throne of Scotland. Elizabeth had a difficult choice. The presence of Mary in England might make her a focal point for those English Catholics who thought she was the rightful Queen of England; in particular she could attract the support of any discontented nobles who felt they had been excluded from power. Mary also had a lot of support in Europe, especially in France. On the other hand, Elizabeth did not like helping subjects against their Queen, she believed Mary was appointed by God as Queen, and so it was her duty to help her. Elizabeth’s Council wanted to keep on friendly relations with the Protestant lords who were ruling Scotland, to keep England’s northern border secure. It seemed too dangerous to do anything other than keep Mary under lock and key in England even though she had been found guilty of no crime.

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*This podcast and the headlines within it, will help you to understand the stormy relationship between Elizabeth and Mary which came to a head in 1568.*

**News announcer: Disguised Queen landed in the North West of England.**

**Reporter:** In May 1568 a fishing boat landed on the coast of north-west England carrying a tall woman in her mid-twenties. The young woman, Mary, Queen of Scots, sent a message to Queen Elizabeth asking if she would help her cousin by restoring her to her throne in Scotland.

Mary had been imprisoned by the Scottish government after she had married the suspected murderer of her second husband! However, she had persuaded her gaoler to let her escape and now she was in England, asking Elizabeth for help, although little in the relationship between the two cousins so far indicated that Elizabeth would be friendly towards Mary.

**News announcer: Cousins’ stormy relationship reached new low.**

**Reporter:** Elizabeth had always been wary of her cousin as she was heir to the English throne, a Catholic and allied to France, but Elizabeth believed that monarchs were appointed by God and so tried to be respectful to Mary. This had not always worked. When Mary started displaying England’s coat of arms to show her claim to the throne, Elizabeth was furious and even more so in 1565 when Mary married Lord Henry Darnley who also had a claim to the English throne. Two years later Elizabeth was genuinely shocked at the murder of Darnley and sent her sympathies to Mary – her ‘sweet sister’ and fellow monarch. Shortly before Mary’s flight to England, however, Elizabeth strongly criticised her for marrying the chief suspect of her husband’s murder.

**News announcer: Elizabeth forced to keep Mary under lock and key.**

**Reporter:** The arrival of Mary in England, asking for Elizabeth’s help in regaining her throne, placed their relationship at an all-time low**.** Elizabeth’s preference was probably to restore Mary to her throne, through negotiations rather than war, and subject to certain conditions such as Mary giving up attempts to secure the English throne. Her failure to do this was due partly to her councillors who did not want Mary back in Scotland and to Mary’s tendency to scheme and deceive. In reply to a request from Mary in May 1568 that the two queens should meet so she could prove her innocence in Darnley’s murder, Elizabeth wrote; ‘O madam! There is no creature living who wishes to hear such a declaration more than I, or will more readily lend her ears to any answer that will acquit your honour’. Yet she never did meet Mary and before the year’s end Elizabeth had decided she could not let Mary go free and ordered her imprisonment.

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