

The English Reformation



Henry VIII



Catherine of Aragon

The English Reformation started in the reign of Henry VIII, who decided to rid himself of his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, after she had failed to produce a male heir to the throne. Divorce was not allowed by the Catholic Church to which Henry VIII belonged.

Henry made a special appeal to the pope so that he might get a special "Papal Dispensation" but the pope refused to grant Henry this and by 1533 the king ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury to grant him a divorce so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. This event effectively led to England breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church based in Rome.

Henry was appointed Supreme Head of the Church by an Act of Parliament in 1534.

The country was still catholic but the pope's power had been ended. At that point, Henry decided to shut down all the monasteries in England – an act known as Dissolution. Some monastery buildings were reduced to ruin as the local population was allowed to take what they wanted, as long as the silver and gold in the monastery went to the Crown.

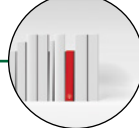
Initially, Henry did not intend to create a Protestant church such as the one evolving on the continent under the influence of Martin Luther or John Calvin. He only wanted to be the supreme head of an English Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, Protestant ideas infiltrated England and Scotland, and Protestant churches were organised, thus setting the stage for 150 years of religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants.

Throughout the 17th century English monarchs tried primarily to assure the supremacy of the State Church of England by enforcing conformity with Anglican doctrine and practice.

At the same time, they had to confront with a Parliament that increasingly challenged the right of the King to make laws, decide legal cases, enforce religious conformity and levy taxes.

activities



↓ TEXT COMPREHENSION

Answer the following questions.

- 1 Who started the English Reformation?
- 2 Why did Henry VIII want to get rid of his wife?
- 3 What was the Dissolution?
- 4 Who was the head of the English Church in 1534?
- 5 What is the Church of England called?