**Elizabethan Religious Settlement**

Like her father, King Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I was a Protestant. When she became Queen, one of the first things it was necessary for her to do was restore the Church of England. Her half-sister, Queen Mary I, had made England a Catholic country again, undoing the work of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, and half-brother, King Edward VI. The re-establishment of the Church of England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I is known as *The Elizabethan Religious Settlement*. This restoration was done by two Acts of Parliament:

**1. THE ACT OF SUPREMACY:** This Act made Queen Elizabeth I "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England. In the reign of her father and brother, the monarch was called "Head of the Church in England", but Elizabeth favoured the title "Supreme Governor". This may have been to appease Catholics who believed the Pope was "head" of the church, or to appease those who believed a woman could not be head of the church. In the sixteenth century women were regarded as inferior to men in spiritual matters and many were uncomfortable with the idea of a woman having religious authority over a man. This Act also included an oath of loyalty to the Queen that the clergy were expected to take. If they did not take it, then they would lose their office. **2. THE ACT OF UNIFORMITY:** Elizabeth established a set form of worship. The Prayer books of Edward VI were fused into one, and were to be used in every church in the land. Church attendance on Sundays and holy days was made compulsory (mandatory/must do), with a twelve pence fine to be collected if people did not attend, the money to be given to the poor. The wording of the Communion was to be vague so that Protestants and Catholics could both participate, and the ornaments and vestments of the Church were to be retained as they had been before the reforms in the second year of Edward's reign.

Queen Elizabeth had watched from afar with great concern the religious wars which were tearing apart the kingdom's on the Continent. When she became Queen she wisely decided to occupy herself with healing the religious tension in England as best as she could in order to prevent her nation from befalling a similar fate. While some Protestants and some Catholics took issue with aspects of Elizabeth's religious policy, most found it to be remarkably tolerable. If we compare Elizabeth's decisions pertaining to religion to those of her predecessors, contemporaries, and even her successor, it is very clear that her policy was the least oppressive. Queen Elizabeth really did make a conscience effort to appease the majority of her subjects by permitting them their religious convictions, so long as they remained loyal subjects. The Elizabethan Church Settlement would be one of the many ways in which Queen Elizabeth would improve the lives of her people.

Queen Elizabeth captured the matter of Christianity best when she said,

***"There is but one God, one Jesus Christ; all else is dispute (arguments) over trifles (little things/issues)."***