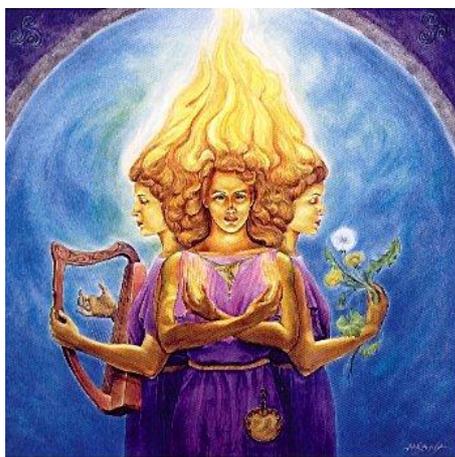


(Short!) History of Religion in the United Kingdom



In the beginning...

In the 1st Century AD, people in Britain worshipped Pagan gods of the earth and Roman gods of the sky.

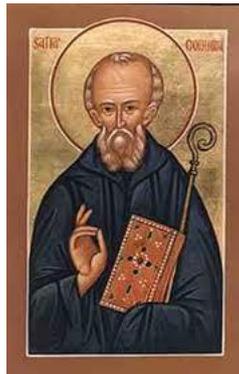


The Missionaries

For a long time, Christianity was a minority faith, but it never disappeared completely, not even during the Dark Ages, when the Roman Empire was collapsing.

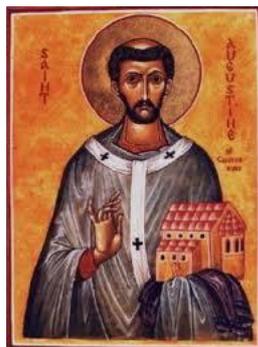
Missionaries were very important in making sure Christianity didn't die out.

One of these missionaries was St. Columba.



Augustine

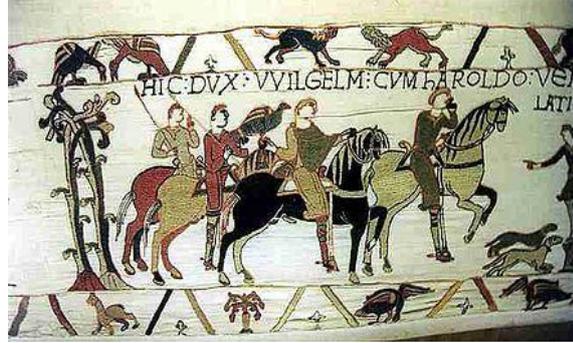
A lot of people say that it was Augustine who really set the course for Christianity in Britain.



He came from Rome in 597 AD to 'Christianize' King Aethelbert of Kent. After this there was a very strong link between Christianity and Kings.

William the Conqueror and the Normans

Christianity still had a big battle ahead of it, with Viking invasions in 9 AD which threatened to destroy the Christian church.



However, with the Norman conquest, things began to change. William, who is often known as the first English king, built new churches which became central parts of the community. The church was beginning to have a lot of control over peoples' lives.

The Reformation

In the 16th Century, the Reformation began. Up until this point, most people in England were Roman Catholic, and the Pope was the head of the church.



In 1517, a German monk called Martin Luther led a breakaway from the Roman Catholic church. They called themselves Protestants because they were protesting against the Roman Catholic church.

King Henry VIII

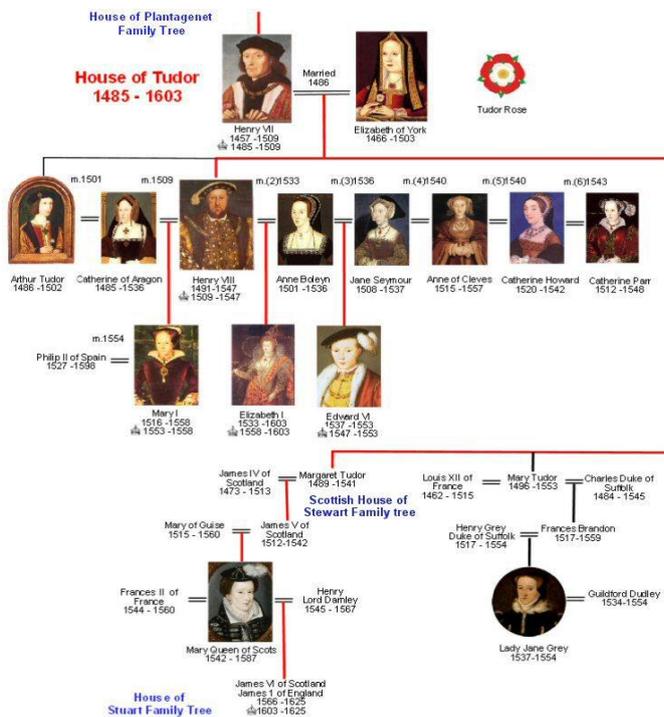
But the English reformers were really only a tiny minority. The main reason why England broke from Rome was down to King Henry VIII.



Henry VIII wanted a divorce from his wife, Catherine of Aragon, so that he could re-marry and have a son and heir to the throne.

But it wasn't as easy as that . . .

Religion under the Tudors



People in Tudor Britain were very religious and over the next 118 of the Tudor Kings and Queens they had to change their religion depending on the religion of the ruling monarch!

Under Tudor rule, England ultimately went from being a Catholic country to a Protestant one under Elizabeth I.

English Civil War

There was even more trouble under King Charles I, who became an enemy of the Scottish people when he tried to interfere with the church of Scotland.



English people were very angry as well because they thought he was trying to bring the Church of England too close to the Catholic Church.

Charles was eventually executed after the English Civil War and there was no monarchy for the next 11 years.

Charles II

The monarchy was restored again in 1660 under King Charles II, and the Church of England was re-established.

During this time, there were a lot of important events, such as the Plague and the Great Fire of London, so it was a difficult time for England.



King James II and William of Orange

When the Catholic James II became king in 1685, people were anxious about a return to Catholicism.



However, William of Orange invaded England and James II fled, leaving William to become King.



The 1689 Act of Toleration finally granted religious freedom all - though not to Catholics! It recognized that there were many faiths within the nation, not just one.



Religion in the UK today

Nowadays, the Queen cannot tell anybody what religion they should be!

| Religion / Denomination | Current religion | Percent % |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Christian | 42,079,000 | 71.6 |
| No religion | 9,104,000 | 15.5 |
| Muslim | 1,591,000 | 2.7 |
| Hindu | 559,000 | 1.0 |
| Sikh | 336,000 | 0.6 |
| Jewish | 267,000 | 0.5 |
| Buddhist | 152,000 | 0.3 |
| Other Religion | 179,000 | 0.3 |