**To what extent did religion continue to divide the kingdom in the period 1660-88?**

**Introduction**

Divisions within the Church of England, the evolution of religious radicalism and dissent, along with the fear of Catholic influence served to divide the kingdom in the period 1660-88. Added to this was the complexity of managing such divisions in a largely Presbytarian Scotland, Catholic Ireland and the changing Church of England.

**Part 1. Divisions in the Church of England continued to divide the Kingdom in the period 1660-88**

During this period the Church again pursued the path of a more narrow definition of uniformity and set about rigorously enforcing this vision through the Clarendon Code that was to result in further expulsions and recruitment for those who chose to dissent. Under Charles II, the Convention Parliament of 1660 reinstated the Church of England and restored the Bishops in the Worcester House Declaration leaving the details to be worked out in the Savoy House Conference of 1661 to create a broad and flexible National Church. However the election of a conservative Parliament of Cavaliers bent on revenge spelt disaster the Puritans and moderates. A combination of High Church Armenians and anti puritan Members of Parliament resulted in an Act of Uniformity in 1662, and in 1663 Sheldon who favoured Laudian episcopal governance was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. In places where Anglican ministers had been rejected for a Puritan one after 1640 there was a complete reversal of the process. The Church Court were recreated, the power of the Bishops reinstated and presbyterianism renounced along with the demand to accept every element of the Common Prayer Book.In all 1,800 ministers lost their living. Anglicanism now came to mean defence of Church of England developed by Laud between the corruptions of Catholicism and Anarchy of Puritanism.

The Anglican church was socially dominant and politically significant in the Restoration .The Corporation act of 1661 laid down the requirement of conformity to cover a range of institutions afterwards. Charles II attempt to suspend the Act of Uniformity and issue a First Declaration of Indulgence offering religious toleration was defeated by a combination of Bishop's and Cavaliers in parliament and he was powerless to prevent the persecution that followed. The Clarendon Code and the Second Act of Indulgence and Test Act of 1672 increased the requirement for conformity. Charles appointed the Earl of Danby Thomas Osborne as Lord Treasurer in 1673 and allowed him to renew persecution of religious dissenters and use royal patronage to establish majorities in both Houses of Parliament. After the problems posed by the Popish Plot and the exclusion crisis 1678-82, Charles returned to this strategy with a vengeance in the hottest period of persecution for protestant dissenters, combined with remodeling borough charters to ensure Tory and Anglican control. By 1685 the Anglican establishment was truly the Church of England but it had failed to achieve the level of uniformity desired by it's leaders and required by a Confessional State. In 1688 Anglican supremacy was demonstrated in the trial of 7 Bishops who opposed James II Declaration of Indulgence offering toleration to both nonconformists and Catholics. The period had witnessed the restoration of Anglicanism and its dominant position in religious and social life along with being a significant political voice and force. However persecution of dissent was to encourage a strong opposition to monarchy which would result in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

**Part 2 The evolution of religious radicalism continued to divide the Kingdom in the period 1660-88**

In the period 1660-69 religious dissent increased because of narrow definitions of uniformity and it's support by individuals and organisations within the political nation. The Clarendon Code 1661 renewed the persecution of Puritans and was directed primarily against those who wanted to remain within the Church and had no desire to establish separatist congregations. Four Acts made up the Clarendon code, The Corporation Act, the Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Article and the Five Mile Act and they were designed to impose uniformity and silence dissent. By 1669 it had largely failed as a strategy. John Shaw was eventually banned from Hull and ejected from the Church. Shaw's experience was repeated many times across the country. The worst suffering was evidenced by the Quakers. By 1662 the Quaker Act was enforced and many imprisoned for failure to swear an Oath of Allegiance. Baptist Preachers suffered a similar fate. Of 1800 Minister who left the Church, 1,000 were ejected in the summer of 1662. Many continued to meet in private houses despite the danger of arrest.

Buy 1669 the worst of the persecution was over for dissenters and a new network began to emerge amongst the presbyterians. in Richard Frankland founded an academy to provide an education for potential clergy and by 1689 over 100 new recruits had been added to the ranks of dissenting clergy. However this did not guarantee their survival as hostility remained as did internal conflicts between different dissenting groups.. The Quakers organisation was shattered but had begun to reorganize by 1669. By 1669 dissent had not only survived but begun to reorganise prompting Sheldon into a Second Conventicle Act of 1670 and a renewed onslaught but this had limited impact and sometimes offended the attitudes of many outside the ranks of dissenters. In 1672 Charles II suspended the Conventicle Act and other persecutory laws in a Declaration of Indulgence that would allow dissenters. Charles and Latitudinarians within the church and signifies the belief that some variation of religious views was both rational and sensible and that persecution was irrational and counterproductive including John Wilkins. Charles appointed a group of close advisors including Catholics Puritans and one atheist in order to challenge the High Church Anglicans and their parliamentary allies for control of religious policy towards dissent.

During the period 1669 to 88 dissent increased because of a swing in the public mood away from uniformity and because of the failure of policies of persecution. By 1673 it was clear that Charles II had missed judged the mood of Parliament and together with a war against the Dutch and a financial crisis he withdrew his Declaration of Indulgence. However that year had enabled the dissenters to consolidate their gains since 1669 and laid the Foundations for further development including building meeting houses the formation of ministers associations and the development of training academies. In addition the Presbyterians took out a licence defining their ministry outside the National Church of England. Although the indulgence was withdrawn licences were not recalled until 1675 and Presbyterianism newly established. When persecution was renewed it implementation was patchy and intermittent because of a lack of desire amongst the political nation. From 1678-83 the impact of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis cemented the alliance between the dissenters and their Whig allies in the corporate Boroughs and urban centres where both had survived and thrived.

Charles renewed his persecution 1683-86 and in many areas meetings of dissenters became problematic when Charles embarked on a recall of borough charters with the aim of gaining control of local administration and their MPs. However in 1686- 87 the persecution ceased and its failure was apparent at the speed in which dissenters reemerged, reconstituted their organisations and took up their spiritual life. The dissenting chapels were stronger and better organised and public opinion had shifted away from uniformity. This accounted for the survival of dissent along with a growing fear of the influence of Catholicism in Charles and James's administration.

**Part 3 The fear of the influence of Catholicism continued to divide the Kingdom1660-88**

The restoration of Charles in England gave the Catholics a measure of safety. The restored Parliament in Scotland dominated by Noble's was also primarily concerned with restricting the power of the Kirk and suppressing dissenters, the Church of Ireland was restored leading to persecution of both Catholics and dissenters. Nevertheless there were signs of renewed concern at a growing threat of catholic influence, notably in the perceptions of wars against the Dutch, the Great Fire of London and the influence at Charles's Court and papists within it. Furthermore the groin ascendancy of Catholic France in Europe also provoked concern of an external threat. this was further afield by the appointment of Clifford and Arlington as courtiers in 1669, the signing of the Treaty of Dover with France in 1670 and Charles taking a new French mistress Louise de la Valliere. This caused the Great concern. a secret clause in the Treaty showed that Charles had promised to announce his conversion to Catholicism as soon as it was safe and appropriate to do so although this was not known at the time.

A declaration of indulgence in 1672 permitted Catholics to worship in private and it produced a hostile reaction in parliament and the Church of England who were concerned about Parliament's authority in religious affairs along with the suspicions over the true religion of Charles and James. Charles subsequently withdrew the indulgence in 1673 choosing to ally with Anglicanism let he should suffer the similar site to his father. From 1673 Fear of Catholicism and absolutism increased significantly. James married a Catholic and the King's favourite Danby built up control of Parliament using royal patronage and French subsidies. Many in the political nation saw the old equation of popery and arbitrary government and perceived that Anglican Bishops were promoting the persecution of Protestants under the guise of protecting the Church. The emergence of political divisions, Whigs (protestant and parliamentarians) and Torys ( Church and Monarchy) came into being with the latter being tainted by association with Catholicism and absolutism. This was apparent in the hysteria of the popish plot and the exclusion crisis 1678-83 but which Charles was able to outmaneuver his whig opponents after the discovery of the Rye House plot was able to focus public fears on dissent and away from Catholicism. The period 1682-86 was a second Stuart absolutism in which loyalty to the King and church enabled the Triennial Act to be ignored the Corporations to be brought under Tory control and financial Independence of the Crown to be secured through French subsidies.

James II wanted equality for Catholics by using his power as monarch thus raising concerns about Catholic influence. This came at a time of increased fear of Huguenot persecution in france 1685. In 1686 James forbade Bishops from delivering anti-Catholic sermons and he set up a Court of Ecclesiastical Commission to oversee its enforcement and set up a system of permits for dissenters and confirmed the king's right to exempt individuals from the Test and Corporation Acts. He then began to dismiss Anglican advisors and set about a process or repealing the Test and Corporations Acts. A Declaration of Indulgence 1687 permitted catholics to worship. When 7 Bishops were tried and acquitted for petitioning against the ~Order this was seen as a victory for Anglicanism and a plot to replace james was put into action with the support of all those who feared a Catholic succession resulting in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the installment of William III and Mary on the throne.

**Conclusion**

The Anglican Church certainly evolved in the period although at times this was certainly not in harmony, provoking serious conflict in the periods when those in charge of the Church sought narrow definitions of uniformity. Charles II and James II presided over periods when definitions of Church uniformity were again to lead to expulsions and promote dissent from the Church of England. The Act of Toleration 1689 was designed to accommodate such factionalism within the Church and support a more flexible and accommodating organisation able to co-exist with by now established dissenters and non-denominational Churches of Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists and Quakers..Religious dissent survived because of the commitment of those who left the Church of England, the support given by sympathizers and the mistakes of those who sought to impose religious uniformity throughout the Stuart reigns. The misjudgement of the Clarendon Code of the 1660’s in defining and creating a further recruiting ground for nonconformity was the most significant factor in their continued existence and explains how they were able quickly to reorganise and reconstitute themselves in the late 1660’s. Finally the decisions made by James II quickly removed any doubt about their survival since his decisions to extend toleration to Catholics provided a broad alliance of dissenters that formed a substantial basis of the opposition that was to result in Glorious Revolution and install the Protestant William and Mary on the throne. Fears of Catholicism’s influence in government increased from 1673 onwards with the influence of Catholics in the Courts of Charles II and James II who even went as far as permitting worship for Catholics and considering the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts culminating in the 1680’s. The effects were to unify the opponents of Catholicism particularly amongst moderate Anglicans, Presbyterians and dissenters and play a significant part in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 with far reaching consequences for the legal status of Catholics and the British political system in the period.