

The final factor to consider is a desire to bring about doctrinal change. In order to assess the role of this factor it is worth examining the legislation passed by parliament in the period 1533–34. Table 2 summarises the legislation.

Table 2 Legislation passed by parliament, 1533–34.

| Date | Act | Main terms |
|------------|---|--|
| Feb 1533 | Act in Restraint of Appeals | Prevents appeals to pope on religious matters. Foreign powers (pope) cannot interfere in England. |
| Jan 1534 | The Act in Restraint of Annates | Stopped payments to Rome. Gave the king the right to appoint bishops. |
| March 1534 | The Act of the Submission of the Clergy | Gives the king control of Convocation and prevents church contact with Rome. |
| March 1534 | The Act of Succession | Ends Catherine's claim to be Henry's wife and therefore makes Mary illegitimate. His marriage to Anne is declared legal and treason to criticise it. |
| March 1534 | The Dispensations Act | Stopped all payments to Rome. Gave the Archbishop of Canterbury the right to decide all legal cases that departed from church law. |
| Nov 1534 | The Act of Supremacy | Henry has control of the Church, including matters of doctrine and beliefs. |
| Dec 1534 | The Act for First Fruit and Tithes | Holders of church jobs had to pass some money on to the king. |
| Dec 1534 | The Treason Act | Crime to criticise the changes, marriage and succession. |

Activity

Consider Table 2 for the period 1533–34.

- 1 Make a list of events that show:
 - the increases in Henry's power
 - Henry's financial gains
 - changes in religious doctrine and beliefs.
- 2 What do you notice about the nature of the changes?
- 3 What does this suggest about the reasons for the break with Rome?

Jurisdictional: Legal changes

The period from 1529 to 1534 saw changes that were largely jurisdictional and gave Henry legal power over the Church. Doctrinal changes, it can be argued, began only with the dissolution of the smaller monasteries in 1536. Their closure was direct assault on the doctrine of purgatory because monks spent much of their time praying for the souls of the dead. However, the legal changes were significant. Many historians would argue that the period witnessed a significant shift in power from the Church to the state. Although the Church would still have influence, it declined in both political and constitutional importance. The Church would never again be able to challenge the state.

What factors influenced religious changes, 1536–47?

In considering this, it might be helpful to divide the religious changes of the period 1536–47 into four phases:

- 1536–39 appeared to see a swing towards Protestantism or a more reformed religion.
- 1539–40 appeared to see a return to more traditional, or Catholic, practices.
- 1541–43 was a period of religious confusion.
- 1544–47 saw the triumph of the reformed faction.

This view is very simplistic and you will find exceptions to this pattern, but it will provide a general framework for you.

Your work in the last section should have suggested that there had been no doctrinal or religious change in the period up to 1536. The pope had been replaced by the king as head of the Church, but doctrinally England was still Catholic and Catholic beliefs had not been attacked.

Religious developments, 1536–39

However, this changed in the period between 1536 and 1539. The major changes that attacked traditional beliefs were as follows:

- 1536: Act of the Dissolution of the Smaller Monasteries (see pages 83).
- 1536: Act of Ten Articles, which rejected four of the seven sacraments of Catholic belief and confirmed a belief in only three – baptism, Eucharist and penance.
- 1536: Royal Injunctions, which attacked the Catholic practice of pilgrimages and also encouraged religious instruction.
- 1537: Bishops' Book; the status of priests was kept vague, as was mass and purgatory, all these issues had been central to Catholicism and the book was seen as reducing their importance.
- 1537: Matthew's Bible, which was a Protestant version.
- 1538: Royal Injunctions, which ordered an English Bible to be present in all parishes within two years, discouraged pilgrimages and ordered the removal of relics.
- 1539: publication of the Great Bible.
- 1539: dissolution of the greater monasteries (see pages 83–85).

Despite these apparent moves towards Protestantism there was evidence, particularly towards the end of the period, of traditional practices being preserved:

- 1538: John Lambert was executed for rejecting transubstantiation.
- 1539: Act of Six Articles confirmed transubstantiation and forbade the taking of communion in both kinds.

The reasons behind these changes are complex and much debated by historians. The reasons for the dissolution and its impact are discussed at length on pages 83–85. However, some possible trends can be identified.

The increasing influence of Thomas Cromwell, particularly his appointment in 1535 as vicegerent in religious matters, may have been significant in taking England down a more reformed religious route. He put pressure on the bishops to agree to the publication and distribution of the Bible in English and also issued the Royal Injunctions, which attacked Catholic practices. He even followed up the Injunctions with letters to JPs ordering them to check they were being enforced. The Bishops' Book, which attacked many Catholic beliefs, was influenced by Cromwell, although it was written by senior members of the clergy. Significantly, Henry insisted that the book was not published until he had read it. The other major evidence of Cromwell's influence was the ordering of a Bible in English to be placed in every parish within two years. This was to be available for all parishioners to read and therefore ended the Catholic monopoly of priests as the only interpreters of the Bible and allowed everyone who could read to find out what the Bible said.

Religious developments, 1539–43

Although there had been some moves towards a more reformed religion in the period from 1536 to 1539, it should also be noted that even then there had been occasions when traditional practices and beliefs were protected. The most notable was the execution of John Lambert in November 1538 for denying transubstantiation. Throughout the whole of his reign Henry maintained a belief in the real presence at the Eucharist and punished those who openly disagreed. This suggests that there were limits to the influence

that Cromwell had over the direction of religious policy and that ultimately the king decided. This became more apparent with the fall and execution of Cromwell in 1540 (see pages 90–91) and it is worth remembering that one of the charges brought against him were his religious beliefs.

The period around 1539–43 certainly suggests that Henry was influential in the development of religious policy. This is seen most obviously in the Act of Six Articles, which attacked some reformed beliefs and confirmed some traditional practices. It was also seen in Henry's marriage to Catherine Howard, the daughter of the Catholic Duke of Norfolk. Some may even argue that this move towards a restoration of more traditional practices continued to 1543 with the Act for the Advancement of True Religion (1543), which restricted access to the Bible to the upper classes and the publication of the King's Book (1543), which defended transubstantiation, and the Six Articles.

However, it is also possible to see the period as one of religious confusion and not simply a return to traditional practices. In this period, Henry gave protection to his archbishop, Cranmer, against attacks by the Catholic faction (see page 92). The Act for the Advancement of True Religion still allowed an English Bible and the King's Book encouraged the reformed belief in preaching and attacked images.

Religious developments, 1544–47

There were very few legislative changes in the period 1544–47. The most significant was the introduction of an English **Litany** in 1544. This replaced the Catholic use of a Latin Litany and might be seen as further evidence of a move towards Protestantism. However, priests did not have to use it. In December 1545 an Act dissolving the chantries was passed, but by the time of Henry's death it had not been enforced. This would have been a significant move towards Protestantism as it represented a full-scale attack on the Catholic belief in purgatory, because chantry priests were employed to say masses for the souls of the dead, but the dissolution would only occur during the reign of his son, Edward VI.

The legislative record may not suggest a move towards Protestantism in Henry's final years. However, the appointments to the **Regency Council**, established by Henry in 1546, suggest otherwise because of the appointment of a significant number of supporters of Protestantism. Similarly, the appointment of the Protestant humanist John Cheke as tutor to Edward also suggests that Henry was moving in a Protestant direction. Yet, in 1546, Henry also had Anne Askew burnt for denying transubstantiation, which suggests that he was still willing to uphold certain Catholic beliefs.

It is difficult to explain the apparent fluctuations in policy. Perhaps Henry was simply being pragmatic and trying to prevent the religious extremism that had caused civil war in other parts of Europe. There is certainly some truth in the claim that he wanted to maintain a religious balance and prevent the domination of one group. If this was his aim, he was successful until the last year of his reign when the Regency Council he appointed was dominated by reformists. However, the triumph of the reformists was only because they controlled the king's will (see page 93). Henry was too ill to write and therefore his will was authorised using the **dry stamp** of the king's signature. The stamp was controlled by the reformist and member of the Privy Chamber, John Denny, while the key to the will was held by the reformer and uncle of Edward, John Seymour. In this way, they ensured that the Regency Council contained a majority of reformers. Henry had wanted a balanced

Civil war in Europe

Religiously motivated wars broke out in Europe throughout the sixteenth century. There was armed conflict in the Holy Roman Empire as the Protestant League fought against the emperor, Charles V, but there had also been fighting between rival religious groups in Germany in 1522. Unrest broke out in Switzerland in 1531, but was short-lived. There were also struggles later in the century in Scotland, France and the Spanish Netherlands.