UNIT 1

How did the Tudor state develop, 1529–40?

What is this unit about?
This unit focuses on the development of the Tudor state in the years 1529–40. The first half explores the important political and religious changes that occurred in the years 1529–36 and the impact that the Reformation had on the nature and exercise of royal power. Although the focus of this book is the nature and development of royal power in the years 1536–88, you cannot understand what happened from 1536 without some knowledge of the very important events that took place in early 1530s, which are known as the English, or Henrician, Reformation. The second part of the unit examines Thomas Cromwell’s role in the political and religious development of the Tudor state in the years 1536–40. It looks at the administrative and religious changes that he enacted and the extent to which these reforms increased royal power before his fall in 1540. The final part of the unit considers the issues and debates arising from the Reformation and their possible influence on later developments.

You will:
• consider the key features of English government in 1529 and the changes that were made during the Reformation of 1529–36
• review the main historical debates about the Reformation and its influence on the development of the Tudor state in the years 1536–88
• explore the role of Thomas Cromwell in the development of Tudor government

Key questions
• To what extent did royal power increase in the aftermath of the Henrician Reformation?
• What were the measures taken to secure and maintain it?
• Why do historians have different views about the nature and significance of these events?

Timeline

- **1529**
  - **October** Wolsey’s fall after failure to obtain an annulment of Henry VIII’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon
  - **November** Parliament meets and is encouraged to express anti-clerical views

- **1531**
  - Thomas Cromwell enters inner circle of King’s advisers

- **1533**
  - **January** Henry marries Anne Boleyn
  - **April** Act in Restraint of Appeals denies Catherine an appeal to Rome
May  | Cranmer pronounces the King’s marriage to Catherine invalid and Anne Boleyn his lawful wife

September  | Birth of Princess Elizabeth

1534
November  | Act of Supremacy declares Henry VIII Head of the English Church; Treason Act makes denial of Supremacy treason

1535
Cromwell appointed Vicegerent (deputy) of Spirituals, begins survey of ecclesiastical property

1536
May–June  | Act for the Dissolution of the smaller monasteries

October  | Rebellion in the north begins

1537
January–February  | Rebellion crushed

June  | Leaders executed

The Bible in English placed in churches, and Bishop’s Book orders further reforms

1538
June–July  | Execution of nobility with Yorkist and Catholic links

1539
Act of Six Articles restores key Catholic doctrines

1540
January  | Henry marries Anne of Cleves but the marriage is unconsummated and quickly annulled

April  | Cromwell created Earl of Essex

June  | Cromwell accused of sheltering heretics, declared guilty of treason by Act of Attainder and executed 28 June

Definition

**King-in-Parliament**
The term used to describe the supreme law-making body created by King and Parliament as the methods and procedures of statute law were developed. After it was clearly established in the fifteenth century that statutes required the assent of the King and both Houses of Parliament, the concept of law made by the King in Parliament was refined and clarified. By 1529 it was already understood that in this function the King, Lords and Commons were not separate bodies but part of a single entity, often called a trinity, able to make law that was binding on every individual, including the King himself.

Revolution in government? The Tudor state, 1529–36

The diagram on page 3 depicts the structure of government in c.1529, with the Royal Court at its centre. Power lay with the King, but to exercise it effectively he relied on a bureaucracy supervised by the Council and the co-operation of both the nobility and Church. His power was at its strongest when he exercised it in Parliament, where both the Church and the nobility were represented. The functions of the various government departments and the royal household overlapped, and power was distributed in a variety of formal and informal ways, as indicated by the arrows. Those highlighted in pink were based within the Court, but some of the legal and administrative departments, highlighted in yellow, had established a permanent presence in the city of London, and did not travel with the King. The whole arrangement was held together by patronage primarily emanating from the King, by which appointments were made and service rewarded. Those who were close to the King acted as patrons and put forward their clients for position and office, enabling them to build
up political influence within and beyond the Court. Hence patronage was an essential ingredient in the development of faction, and a major cause of factional rivalry. It gave the King great power, but needed to be handled carefully to prevent rivalries from getting out of control.

**Definition**

**Faction**

Faction was the term used to describe the political groups gathered around the King, who sought to gain power and influence his decisions. Usually grouped around one or more members of the greater nobility, they were defined by political and religious attitudes, personal loyalty and ambition for office. Where these commitments clashed, factional rivalry could be vicious, and one of the key arts of kingship was the ability to maintain a balance of patronage so that no significant faction was alienated and driven to opposition or rebellion.

1.1 The Court of King Henry VIII and the government of England, c.1529

By 1536 a number of changes had taken place, as outlined in the table of events set out on pages 4 and 5. The most important was Henry's claim, supported by parliamentary statute in 1534, to be the head of the English Church in both temporal (administrative) and spiritual matters. This lay at the heart of the Henrician Reformation, but it also necessitated a great number of other changes in order to support and secure the new arrangements. The complex process involved changes in the role and function of Parliament, the extension of central government in the localities, changes in religious practice, the destruction of existing institutions and the development of new ones. Some of the changes were planned and deliberate, but others were unforeseen or carried effects and implications that only gradually became apparent. They created both support and opposition, which influenced the process of development and the ways in which it was understood and interpreted. It could be argued that the legacy of the Reformation, and the efforts of both governments and their enemies to deal with it, shaped the development of the Tudor state from 1536–88.
### Table of events: The development of the Tudor State, 1529–36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1529</td>
<td>March–July:</td>
<td>Court at Blackfriars led by Papal Legates, Campeggio and Wolsey considers case for annulment of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon.</td>
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<td>July:</td>
<td>Court adjourns. Henry summoned to Rome.</td>
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<td>August:</td>
<td>Writs issued for elections to Parliament.</td>
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<td>October:</td>
<td>Wolsey accused of placing loyalty to the Church above his duty to the King, and dismissed. Sir Thomas More appointed Lord Chancellor, persecution of Protestant heretics intensifies.</td>
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<td>1530</td>
<td>Throughout:</td>
<td>Throughout 1530 Henry encourages scholarly discussion of his case in Oxford and Cambridge. Some scholars like Thomas Cranmer find in the King’s favour, although dissenting minorities disagreed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>January:</td>
<td>Mission to Pope headed by Thomas Boleyn, father of Anne.</td>
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<td>July:</td>
<td>Pope rejects petition from English nobility on Henry’s behalf and French attempt to mediate fails.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1531</td>
<td>January–February:</td>
<td>Clergy pardoned on payment of a large fine. Convocation of Canterbury recognises Henry as Head of the Church ‘as far as the law of Christ allows’. Thomas Cromwell appointed as royal secretary and joins Henry’s inner ring of advisers.</td>
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<td>1532</td>
<td>January–May:</td>
<td>Parliament in session. Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates threatens to withhold papal taxes. Commons ‘Supplication against the Ordinaries’ (probably drawn up by Cromwell in 1529) attacks the Bishops and the power of the clergy to make laws applicable to the laity, appealing to the King to intervene.</td>
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<td>May:</td>
<td>The ‘Submission of the Clergy’ marks the formal end of their independent legislative powers. More resigns as Lord Chancellor. Discussions begin with German Protestant states for an alliance. Death of Archbishop Warham allows Henry to appoint a new Archbishop of Canterbury.</td>
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<td>September:</td>
<td>Anne Boleyn created Marchioness of Pembroke.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>December:</td>
<td>Anne pregnant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1533</td>
<td>January:</td>
<td>Henry secretly marries Anne Boleyn.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>February:</td>
<td>Anne’s protégé and reformist scholar, Thomas Cranmer, appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, consecrated in March.</td>
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<td>February–April:</td>
<td>Parliament in session. Passes Act in Restraint of Appeals – ends Rome’s legal jurisdiction, prevents any appeal from Catherine in April/May, when Cranmer pronounces the marriage of Henry and Catherine invalid and Henry’s marriage to Anne legal.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June:</td>
<td>Anne crowned.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>September:</td>
<td>Princess Elizabeth born.</td>
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### 1534

**January–March:** Parliament in session. Passes Succession Act, excluding Mary; Act in Absolute Restraint of Annates; Act for the Submission of the Clergy.

**April:** Cromwell appointed Principal Secretary. Execution of Elizabeth Barton, ‘The Nun of Kent’ who had claimed to see visions showing God’s disapproval of the King’s actions.

**November–December:** Parliament returns for a second session and passes the Act of Supremacy which declares that Royal Supremacy over the Church already exists and provides the means to enforce it. Also passes a new Treason Act that extends the definition of treason to cover words, and the Act for First Fruits and Tenths, allowing the King to tax the Church directly.

### 1535

**May–July:** Execution of opponents – Carthusian monks in May, Bishop John Fisher (whom the Pope had made a Cardinal) in June, and Sir Thomas More in July. The Coverdale Bible, first complete English translation, to be placed in churches.

### 1536

**January:** Death of Catherine of Aragon.

**February–April:** Last session of the Reformation Parliament produces Statute of Uses (compelling payment to the Crown when land inherited); Act for the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries; Welsh Act of Union; Act abolishing Franchises and Liberties; Act for the Court of Augmentations (dealing with Church property now transferred to the Crown).

**May:** Anne Boleyn executed after being accused of incest and multiple adultery. Henry marries Jane Seymour.

**June–July:** New Parliament passes Second Succession Act and Act Against Papal Authority. Cromwell issues Ten Articles setting out key doctrines and practice for the Church and incorporating distinctly Protestant ideas, similar to those published by Martin Luther in Germany. Cromwell also becomes Lord Privy Seal and Baron Cromwell. Benefitting from the fall of the Boleyn faction, allies with the Seymours and gains appointments for his followers, Ralph Sadler and Peter Mewtas in the King’s private household alongside Edward Seymour.

**August:** Royal Injunctions issued to instruct and control the actions of the clergy, again showing strong Lutheran influence.

**October:** Outbreak of rebellion in Lincolnshire, followed by risings across the north, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. Henry forced to play for time, to promise concessions, and to issue a general pardon in order to disperse the rebels in early December.
Not surprisingly, given the range and scale of events in these years, historians have interpreted them in many different ways. Discussion has focused on two key issues:

- What caused the Reformation?
- Who was responsible for it?
What caused the Reformation?

Most historians agree that the King’s desire for a divorce played some part in causing the break with Rome, but they differ a great deal as to its significance.

Geoffrey Elton

In the 1950s Geoffrey Elton established the view that changes took place because of ‘high politics’ – that is the political decisions made at the centre of power by the King and his closest advisers. He and other historians therefore saw it as a Henrician Reformation – made by Henry’s government. His need for a divorce and a male heir was crucial in his decision to challenge the authority of the Pope, and he was driven by political considerations relating to the need for a male heir and his desire to extend royal power. What enabled him to do it was the state of the Church in the 1520s. Because the Church was weakened by corruption he was able to call on men like Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer, who had been influenced by the work of Martin Luther and other continental reformers, to help him take control of the Church in England. However, Cromwell’s aim of an independent nation state governed by King-in-Parliament went well beyond reform of the Church. The Reformation was therefore primarily political.

A. G. Dickens

Elton’s interpretation was partly challenged by the work of A. G. Dickens, who emphasised the religious reasons for change and saw it as an English Reformation, made by the English people as well as the King. Dickens found a great deal of evidence of anti-clericalism in England in the early sixteenth century, and in his view there would have been a religious Reformation in England without Henry. He argued that the existence of Lollard congregations, growing resentment of clerical greed and privileges, and contacts with northern Europe through trade allowed Protestant influence to grow in England, especially in London and the south-east but also in towns and ports like Hull and Norwich. Henry’s ambitions dictated the timing and the precise nature of what happened, but its main causes lay in the state of the Church itself.

Revisionist historians

In response to this, however, a number of revisionist historians began to conduct further research, particularly into local communities and the religion of the people, and discovered that, in many parts of England, the Church remained influential and respected. Money was spent on local churches, pilgrimages and feast days were popular, and in many areas the Church and the clergy played an essential role in both the material and spiritual life of the community. Historians such as Christopher Haigh and Eamonn Duffy pointed out that much of the criticism came from within

Definitions

Anti-clericalism
The dislike of the clergy, caused by differences over doctrine and/or the wealth of the Church, the behaviour of the clergy and the privileges that they enjoyed.

Lollards
These were the supporters of John Wycliffe. He had criticised the Church in the late fourteenth century for many of the same reasons as Martin Luther in 1517. Lollards had been associated with the Peasants Revolt of 1381, and were therefore persecuted as heretics by the Church and as rebels by the state. Most of the Lollard congregations had died out, or met in secret, but their ideas left a legacy of popular anti-clericalism and hostility to the wealth and power gathered by the Church.
the clergy itself, suggesting that, where problems did exist, the Church was quite capable of providing necessary reforms. Responsibility for the Reformation therefore lay with Henry's marital problems and political ambitions, supported by a minority of religious radicals and politically ambitious officials who were able to persuade or intimidate the majority into accepting what was happening by using the power of the state. Chief among these was the King's principal adviser, Thomas Cromwell.

Was Thomas Cromwell the architect of the Henrician Reformation?

Elton saw the Reformation as a political revolution created by Thomas Cromwell. He argued that between 1529 and 1531 Henry was flexing his political muscles without any real sense of how to achieve his annulment, until Cromwell entered the inner circle of his advisers. Thereafter the pace and direction of events changed. Thomas Cromwell had travelled widely in Europe, and his acquaintance with humanist and Lutheran ideas encouraged him to pursue the idea of a nation state, independent of any outside power, in which the ruler was in charge of religion as well as other matters. As a lawyer he had both the vision and the skills necessary to carry out reforms through Parliament, creating a powerful state based on law made by King-in-Parliament. In enhancing the power of the Crown in partnership with Parliament he was also imposing limitations on the rule of Rex Solus – the King alone. Monarchs had always needed a partnership with the nobility and gentry to govern effectively, but now the partnership was given a formal definition in which ultimate power lay with the law itself. In addition, he set about building up the resources of the Crown and organising a bureaucratic system of administration, based on an inner Royal Council and organised departments of state, that could operate, if necessary, without the direct intervention of the monarch. In Elton's view this represented a revolution in government, and laid the foundations of parliamentary monarchy in a modern British state.

His arguments were challenged in a number of ways, and the debate over the 'Tudor revolution in government' became the focus of many years of research. Some historians challenged the idea of a revolution, pointing out that many of the changes had begun well before 1529. Others cast doubt upon Elton's claim that Cromwell initiated a bureaucratic revolution, arguing that the King's household and the Privy Chamber remained influential for many years and that Cromwell's reforms were not the result of far-sighted planning, but of immediate necessities. J. J. Scarisbrick argued that Elton over-estimated Cromwell and underestimated Henry. While acknowledging that events were far more coherently directed after Cromwell came to prominence, Scarisbrick suggests that idea of the Royal Supremacy came from Henry, who was well acquainted with both Lutheran ideas and other scholarly debates about religion and the state. Cromwell's great skill was to provide the means of achieving Henry's ambition, as an 'administrator of genius', but the initiative always lay with Henry. Hence, when Cromwell went too far for Henry's taste, in adopting Lutheran practices and attacking traditional rituals and ceremonies, he was
rapidly restrained. However, in extending the scope and status of royal power, he had Henry's support, and could proceed largely unhindered.

As the debates continued Elton accepted some of the criticisms and adjusted his arguments, while further analysis of the claims made by his critics showed that some of the conflicts could be reconciled. It is now widely accepted that the break with Rome and development of King-in-Parliament had revolutionary implications for the Tudor state. It is also agreed that, even if he did not initiate the changes on the basis of far-sighted planning, Thomas Cromwell's political and administrative skills were essential to their success. Similarly, most historians accept that Henry's marital problems, political ambitions and the state of the Church played some part in causing the Reformation. Where judgements still differ, it is the relative importance of these factors and their implications for the future development of the Tudor state that divide opinions most sharply.

The nature of historical debate

The development of research into the Reformation of the 1530s illustrates the reasons for, and impact of, debates and controversies in the study of history. Elton's claims have been challenged and revised in a process covering 50 years of research and the acquisition of greater knowledge and understanding as a result of the questions raised about his work. In that sense, the range of his conclusions and the contentious nature of some of them served as a stimulus to further investigation, and the conclusions drawn by some of his critics have in turn been subjected to scrutiny. In the final outcome the debate has led to a better understanding of the Reformation, in which Elton's claims have been revised and re-balanced to stand alongside a range of other views.

This does not mean, however, that there is universal agreement. What the debate reveals is that the nature of historical investigation makes some disagreement inevitable. Based on fragmented evidence provided by contemporaries who were influenced by their own views and interests, historical judgements necessarily rely on a process of reasoning and evaluation that can never constitute 'proof'. Similarly, the issues that have to be addressed, such as causation and motivation, significance, or the role of particular individuals, are themselves matters of interpretation and judgement. Historical debates, and the existence of controversy, are therefore intrinsic to the study of history. Historical judgements gain validity (but not the status of ‘facts’) from the evidence used and by standing up to a process of scrutiny in which conflicts are often explained, if not reconciled, and adjustments permit different interpretations to stand within a broad area of consensus.

How did the Tudor state develop in the years 1536–40?

Elton's claims that Cromwell was the architect of a Tudor revolution in government rested partly on his role in managing the break with Rome in 1533–34, but also on his role as the King's closest adviser in the years that
followed. His pre-eminence in managing the King's affairs by 1535 is accepted by most historians, as he oversaw the changes made necessary by the break with Rome. From 1536, the measures taken to maintain and develop royal power can be seen as largely the work of Cromwell, and of the staff and supporters whom he appointed to carry out the work of government. However, the source of Cromwell's power remained Henry himself. His influence on the nature and extent of development was considerable, and at times very direct.

Religious reforms

By 1536 Royal Supremacy in Church and state was established, and widely accepted. Although the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, took the lead in theological debates, it was Cromwell who was given the task of shaping the new Church. In 1535 he was appointed the King's Vicegerent in spiritual matters and initiated a full survey of Church property, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, followed in September by visitations of all the religious houses in the kingdom. By early 1536 he was able to present Parliament with an extensive dossier detailing the 'manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living' that characterised the smaller monasteries and obtain an Act for their dissolution and the transfer of their property to the Crown. By the middle of 1536 the process of dissolution, carried out by government commissioners on Cromwell's instructions, was well under way. Although presented as a process of reform, there is no doubt that the financial benefits involved in the dissolution were a powerful inducement for both Henry and Cromwell. Cromwell may have been aiming to use the wealth of the Church to improve royal finances, but he also began to sell off Church lands to the gentry and nobility. It has been suggested that his aim was to give them a stake in the new order, and

**SKILLS BUILDER**

Re-read the different interpretations of the causes, nature and management of the Reformation. How far can the differences be explained by:

- the nature and limits of the evidence
- social and geographical variations
- the issues addressed
- the questions asked by different historians?

Evaluate the examples that you find to set out your own overview on the basis of the following questions:

- What caused the Reformation?
- Who was responsible for it?
- How far did it change the Tudor state between 1529 and 1536?
if this was the case, it proved successful. When Mary restored the power of the Papacy in 1554, she was unable to persuade Parliament, or those represented within it, to restore any significant part of Church lands and property.

However, the wider changes enacted by Cromwell during the years 1536–38 suggest that his support for religious reform was sincere:

- In 1536 he issued Ten Articles of faith which incorporated distinctly Protestant ideas, for example reducing the necessary sacraments from seven to three.
- He followed this with a set of Injunctions in 1536, a Bishops’ Book in 1537 and further Injunctions in 1538, all of which attacked superstitious practices and encouraged the dismantling of statues and shrines.
- In 1537 he ordered an English translation of the Bible, and in 1538 a royal proclamation ordered that a copy should be placed in every parish church, accessible for anyone to read.

These measures reflect a distinctly Protestant theology and would, in the long run, significantly change the nature and practice of religion in England. Protestants argued that salvation came only from personal faith and that only participation in the key sacraments of baptism, marriage and most importantly, the Eucharist (communion) could contribute to a soul’s salvation, and then only if carried out in the right spirit of faith and repentance. They also emphasised the importance of private prayer and of Bible reading, since the Bible (and not the Pope) was the source of knowledge about God. The Bible was God’s word, and provided all that a Christian needed in the way of guidance. Hence the Bible must be accessible to all, and the role of the clergy was to guide and educate the laity to understand it.

Given these sympathies, Cromwell had many reasons other than finance for dissolving the monasteries. As international organisations the religious orders encouraged loyalty to authorities outside England, and many had direct links with the Papacy. More importantly, their whole purpose conflicted with the Protestant idea of justification by faith alone and the personal nature of salvation. Although monastic orders often fulfilled useful functions – as charities, hospitals, places of safekeeping, and hospitality for travellers – their primary purpose was to create a fund of prayer and devotion on behalf of the wider world, for the forgiveness of sins. Protestant ideas were based on the premise that one person’s prayers could not atone for another’s sins. Salvation could only come from personal faith and repentance, which not only removed the validity of the monastic life but portrayed its purpose as misleading and spiritually dangerous.

Whatever Cromwell’s motives, his introduction of Protestant ideas and practice could be expected to further undermine respect for the Papacy and help to justify and maintain the break with Rome. This was illustrated in 1536 by the outbreak of rebellion in Lincolnshire and the north. While the original causes of the revolt were various, under the leadership of
Robert Aske it was given the character of a religious crusade as the Pilgrimage of Grace. It was therefore logical, once the revolt had been crushed, to attack the forces that had lent it support and credibility. The greater monasteries, spared in 1536, were subjected to punishment for any part in the rebellion and to wider pressure to dissolve and to transfer their property to the Crown. Cromwell retained some of this to boost royal finances but continued the policy of sales and gifts to supporters to ensure their loyalty. By 1539 the destruction of English monasticism was virtually complete, with both the Crown and its leading subjects benefiting from the process.

**Political developments**

Cromwell's political influence was also increasing rapidly. He had already secured the support of courtiers in the Privy Chamber such as Sir John Russell and Sir Thomas Heneage who had once served Wolsey. In 1533 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer, in charge of the official (if somewhat outdated) court that managed royal revenues, and Master of the Rolls, which gave him a clear function within the legal system. His role as Secretary to the King had included the provision of the agenda and the collection of minutes for meetings of an ‘inner ring’ of the King's Council, which Henry had increasingly relied on since Wolsey’s fall. This was a group of about nineteen major office-holders, greater nobility and close associates of the King. The presence of such men meant that Cromwell could never completely control its meetings and decisions, but his role as Secretary enabled him to exercise significant influence. In 1536 this was formalised as Principal Secretary to the Council, allowing him to maintain its records and employ his own staff to carry out the clerical work.

The Council was split between two factions – the conservative Aragonese faction who had supported Catherine, maintained links with the Hapsburgs, and sought to defend Princess Mary's interests, and the more radical Boleyn faction, centred around Anne, but also linked to her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk. Although Cromwell's religious stance and role in the Reformation placed him close to the Boleyns, he had always maintained some independence, which proved vital when in early January 1536 the death of Catherine of Aragon and Anne's Boleyn's miscarriage of a son led to her downfall. Henry's relationship with Anne had already soured, and Catherine's death released him from any difficulty in contracting a further marriage. When Jane Seymour was given rooms close to the King in February 1536, it signalled the decline of Anne's position, giving her enemies the chance to act and placing her friends in danger.

At this point Cromwell seems to have taken the initiative, and it was he who was responsible for the accusations of treason and adultery that brought Anne's downfall, and the collection of dubious evidence that saw her convicted and executed. His actions were not, however, taken in the interests of the Aragonese faction. After Henry's marriage to Jane in May 1536 the Second Succession Act in June did not restore Mary to her rights,
and her friends in the Chamber and Council – Henry Courtenay, Marquis of Exeter, Sir Nicholas Carew, Lord Darcy and others – found themselves removed from favour and in some cases their positions.

Biography

Henry Courtenay
The Courtenay family had extensive estates in Devon, and held the title of Earls of Devon as well as Marquis of Exeter. In 1538 Henry Courtenay would be executed for treason on somewhat doubtful evidence. Courtenay’s main crime was his close association with Reginald Pole, the most important living member of the Yorkist connection and a Roman Catholic Cardinal who had fled to Rome in order to raise support for an invasion of England. On both counts he was a threat to the King. The Courtenays played a significant role in the Western Rising of 1549 (see pp 000) and the Wyatt rebellion (see pp 000).

Biography

Lord Darcy
Lord Darcy was a member of the Aragonese faction, having served in Princess Mary’s household. In 1535 both he and Lord Hussey had been involved in discussions with the Imperial ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, about a possible rebellion supported by troops sent from Charles V. In 1536 he became involved with Robert Aske and others in the Pilgrimage, and was executed for treason in 1537.

It was Cromwell who gained most from Anne’s fall. With Norfolk weakened, the Boleyns destroyed and the Aragonese out-maneuvered, he replaced Anne’s father as Lord Privy Seal in July 1536, and was ennobled as Baron Cromwell. As Lord Privy Seal he controlled the official stamp used to authenticate documents with the King’s signature, giving him direct access to Henry’s pronouncements and decisions as well as the capacity to issue documents in the King’s name. He was also able to gain appointments for two of his staff, Peter Mewtas and Ralph Sadler to the Privy Chamber. This strengthened his influence in the King’s household, and when the execution of Courtenay in 1538 brought the downfall of his contacts at Court, Cromwell seized the opportunity to promote his clients, Anthony Denny and Thomas Heneage as Chief Gentleman of the Bedchamber and Groom of the Stool. In 1539 he was himself appointed Chief Noble of the Privy Chamber, and in 1540, became Lord Great Chamberlain, in charge of the Household, and Earl of Essex.

Administrative changes
Cromwell’s efforts to maintain political influence in the King’s household as well as on the Council testifies to the continued significance of such informal sources of power, but he also sought to reform and develop a more effective administration to manage royal affairs. The traditional administrative courts of Chancery (wills and property) and the Exchequer (fines and fees) were slow and inefficient, and Henry VII had transferred much of his financial administration into the Privy Purse, managed from within the Privy Chamber. As the break with Rome developed, Cromwell tried to set royal finances on a firmer footing, setting

Discussion Point
What do these events reveal about the nature and exercise of power in the Tudor state? How far was Henry VIII in control during the years 1536–40?

Definition
Administrative courts
These were bureaucratic departments, with paid clerks and officials, who dealt with the affairs of government. The term ‘court’ reflects the fact that their work covered finance, administration and the legal issues arising from it, and was probably derived from the Royal Court, itself originally the place where kings administered justice.
up a Court of First Fruits and Tenths to tax the clergy in 1534 and a Court of Augmentations to manage the property transferred from the monasteries in 1536. In the same year the Court of General Surveyors, originally set up to deal with household income in 1515, was constituted as a permanent department. Unlike the Exchequer, the Court of Augmentations adopted modern collection and accounting procedures, whose success led them to be adopted in the Court of Wards, which was set up in 1540 to manage the affairs of the King’s wards – the children of the nobility for whom he took responsibility if their parents died while they were young. In 1541 and 1542 these methods were extended to First Fruits and Tenths and the General Surveyors, providing a coherent system of six financial and administrative departments based on Cromwell’s reforms.

Similarly, the Statute of Uses, passed in 1536, sought to ensure that the Crown received its correct share of payments from the landed classes. This caused bitter resentment among sections of the nobility and gentry and in 1540 it was replaced by a Statute of Wills which offered a compromise and allowed greater freedom in distributing bequests across a number of heirs, but still secured a reasonable income for the Crown. However, the most significant of Cromwell’s administrative reforms were those that sought to extend royal power and a standard legal system across the country and through all the localities. In 1536 Cromwell secured an Act abolishing Franchises and Liberties. Many of these had been set up in border areas, in the north and along the Welsh Marches, where they had been useful in maintaining order over difficult areas, but in Cromwell’s eyes they represented a barrier to royal power and the rule of law. They were, his Act declared, ‘to the great diminution and detriment of the royal estate... and the hindrance and great delay of justice’. At the same time he introduced a Welsh Act of Union, which extended English law and the system of Justices of the Peace (JPs) and Common Law Courts into Wales, and strengthened the Councils for the North and Welsh Marches. Originating in the reign of Henry VII, these were run by members of the royal Council with authority directly from the King. Overall, this legislation represented a significant extension of central authority, and a continuation of the process begun with the Act of Supremacy. By 1540 Cromwell’s reforms had improved both fiscal and administrative efficiency, but most significantly, he had brought the entire kingdom of England and Wales under the direct control of the Crown, subject to supreme laws made by King-in-Parliament, unchallenged by any independent religious, legal or judicial institutions. By 1540 the full impact of these changes had not been felt, but their potential influence on the development of the Tudor state was immense.

Why did Cromwell fall from power in 1540?

Given Cromwell’s achievements and the benefits that Henry derived from them, his fall from power in June 1540 seems surprising – and certainly he does not appear to have foreseen it himself. Nevertheless, there had been signs since 1538 that Henry was uncomfortable with the direction of
developments, especially in matters of religion. The Pilgrimage of Grace may well have given him pause for thought, but Henry’s own religious preferences were conservative. His rejection of Rome did not imply a rejection of key Catholic doctrines, and he had already shown opposition to both clerical marriage and the elevation of preaching above ritual. By 1538 his distaste for the more extreme Protestants had hardened into distrust, and he appeared in person at the trial of John Lambert, to pronounce a sentence of death for his heresy in denying the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the communion sacrament – the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Encouraged by conservatives like Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop Winchester who returned from an embassy in France and eventually gained a seat on the inner Council, Henry intervened to restrain religious changes. In 1539, the Ten Articles of 1536 were replaced with a more conservative Act of Six Articles, imposed by parliamentary statute with the full force of royal authority. The Act restored the traditional seven sacraments, the demand for clerical celibacy, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Cromwell accepted the change, and seemed to recover his position successfully, but the warning had been given.

It was, however, foreign policy and Henry’s marital affairs that brought about his fall. After the death of Jane Seymour, shortly after giving birth to the longed-for male heir, he sought to use the King’s single status to cement an alliance with Protestant Germany by arranging a marriage to Anne of Cleves. There were good reasons for the alliance. The Pope had persuaded the Hapsburg Emperor and King of France to patch up their differences, and hoped to launch a Catholic crusade against England, and as fear of invasion increased, the possibility of using the German Protestants to force the Emperor to focus on his own territories seemed a logical counter-measure. Unfortunately Henry had reservations about both a Protestant alliance and his marriage to Anne. When she arrived in England January 1540, she was neither as beautiful as promised nor well prepared for marriage. Henry’s reluctant attempt to consummate the marriage ended in humiliating failure and a speedy, if amicable, separation.

Although Cromwell quickly secured an annulment his position was sufficiently weakened for his enemies to intervene. His enemies on the Council had long resented his rise from humble beginnings and the power that he came to wield. The conservative faction led by Norfolk and Gardiner disliked his religious views, while Norfolk and his associates hated Cromwell for his destruction of the Boleyns. Now they saw their opportunity. Playing on Henry’s resentment of the Cleves fiasco and a suspicion that Cromwell had tried to follow his own religious preferences, Norfolk, Gardiner and the conservative faction persuaded him that Cromwell was protecting heretics and undermining royal authority. With the added sweetener of Catherine Howard, Norfolk’s pretty and flirtatious niece, as a prospective bride, Henry was persuaded to order an investigation. In June 1540 Cromwell was arrested at a meeting of the Council, and hustled out by Norfolk and the Earl of Southampton.

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**Biography**

**Catherine Howard**

Catherine Howard was the daughter of Lord Edmund Howard, born probably in 1521. She was the niece of the Duke of Norfolk and second cousin of Anne Boleyn. Her father was one of the poorer Howards and so she spent much of her youth in the care of her step-grandmother, Agnes, Dowager Duchess of Norfolk. However, her grandmother was frequently absent at court and so Catherine’s education and moral upbringing was neglected. She suffered the same fate as her cousin, beheaded for adultery and treason, although in her case the evidence points firmly to her guilt.
Whether Henry had ordered this is unclear, but with Cromwell in the Tower his enemies were able to produce evidence of his association with heretics. Three Lutherans, Robert Barnes, William Jerome and Thomas Garret, none of whom had openly advocated heretical views, were arrested, tried in secret (like Cromwell) and burned at Smithfield two days after the minister's execution on 28 June. His appeals to Henry had been ignored, and his guilt secured by Act of Attainder, removing the necessity for reliable legal evidence. It has been suggested that, distracted by Catherine Howard, Henry was only partially aware of what was happening. Certainly it was not long before he had regrets, lamenting to the French ambassador that because of false accusations and 'light pretexts' he had lost 'the most faithful servant I ever had'.

**How important was Thomas Cromwell in the development of the Tudor state?**

Cromwell’s fall brought an end to the partnership that had created the Henrician Reformation, at a point where its development and direction was still in doubt. It is neither possible nor necessary to weigh up the relative influence and importance of the King and the minister within that partnership, since their roles, strengths and weaknesses were largely complementary, as Henry soon realised. In 1540 the break with Rome and the assertion of national sovereignty, the reform of religious abuses, the extension of royal power across the kingdom and the supremacy of King-in-Parliament were still works in progress. At the same time, they were changes of such magnitude that they divided the nation, and their implications would inevitably influence political development in the foreseeable future. For this reason a definitive judgement requires knowledge of longer-term developments, but a number of relevant arguments can be considered here.

Critics point out that many of Cromwell’s administrative changes were abandoned or altered within the next decade, and religious changes would be held in check until after 1547. It has been argued convincingly that, in order to protect his own power, Cromwell prevented the evolution of the inner circle of advisers gathered by the King in 1531 into a formal Privy Council and that this key development in later Tudor government was helped by his fall. It is also clear that the Privy Chamber and the royal household continued to exercise political influence alongside the Council. Nevertheless Cromwell’s management of the King’s inner circle from 1533–40 foreshadowed the emergence of the Privy Council and established the procedures required. Although the financial courts were reorganised after 1540, the model adopted in the new arrangements was based on Cromwell’s designs. Cromwell did not replace the influence of the Privy Chamber with bureaucratic departments – he operated in both environments, and would probably have fallen prey to faction more rapidly if he had not done so. His encouragement of Protestant ideas had already been checked, but the translation of the Bible into English, the attack on shrines and pilgrimages, the removal of monastic influence and the
experience of debate all helped to consolidate the existence of reforming ideas and the influence of reformers. At the same time, they alarmed conservatives and encouraged a clash of loyalties that had religious, social and political implications. These rivalries influenced the development of political faction before and after 1540, and occasionally led to rebellion, but Cromwell’s methods had also changed the political context. The elevation of Parliament and the role of statute law in the changes enacted from 1533–40 meant that any future developments would require the active participation of parliaments, and of the political nation that they represented, as well as the intervention of the monarch. How these different elements handled the agenda set by Henry and Cromwell would shape the development of the Tudor state thereafter.

Unit summary

What have you learned in this unit?

The Reformation in England was caused by a combination of factors, including Henry’s desire for a divorce and the problems already facing the Church. It was organised and guided through parliament by Thomas Cromwell, whose perception of the state went well beyond the royal supremacy in religion to include the supremacy of statute law and the extension of government authority over the kingdom as a whole, as well as the rejection of foreign influence and loyalties. The development of government institutions continued right up to Cromwell’s death, and the achievements of 1529–35 were consolidated according to Henry’s wishes. Although intertwined with older issues such as the relationship between Crown and nobility, and wider European developments, it was primarily the impact of the Reformation that shaped the development of the Tudor state from 1536–88. This is because:

- The establishment of Royal Supremacy over the Church greatly enhanced the power and status of the monarch, but also made the Crown responsible for the spiritual welfare of the people – a subject on which they might have strong views. Religious issues had become deeply divisive, and the Crown could not stand aloof from them.
- The development of King-in-Parliament enhanced the powers of the Crown through a partnership with the political nation represented in the Lords and Commons, whose assent was crucial in key areas such as legislation and taxation. Parliament was a powerful ally, but also a forum for opposition where obstruction could have serious consequences.
- The need to enforce acceptance of the changes and strengthen security against foreign intervention led to a marked extension of central government authority. Relations between central and local authority, and thus between the Crown and its partners in government, required adjustments that would not necessarily be painless.

From 1536 to 1553 and beyond, political factions were defined by all of these issues, interacting in different ways and in different circumstances.
Managing them would shape the development of the Tudor state and, at times, determine its survival.

What skills have you used in this unit?
You have analysed the changes enacted in the 1530s, evaluated the arguments of historians, and made judgements about the significance of events. You have applied these skills to gain understanding that there are controversies in history because of:

- the nature of the evidence, which has to be interpreted,
- the concepts that they deal with, such as significance, causes and motives,
- the experience and interests of different historians,
- the context in which they carry out research, and therefore...
- the questions that they ask.

As you work through the units that follow you will use these skills to explore key issues, and to practice exam style questions. It is unlikely that you will be asked questions that focus only on the years 1536-40, but the knowledge that you have acquired and the skills that you have practised will be relevant to questions in both part (a) and part (b) of the examination.

**RESEARCH TOPIC**

You have already touched on religious ideas and the conflict between Protestant and Catholic beliefs, but you will benefit throughout your course from developing a deeper understanding. You may well need to look at developments outside England in order to do this. Try to find out:

- What criticisms of the Church were made by Renaissance humanists like Erasmus?
- In what ways did Martin Luther challenge the doctrine and organisation of the Church between 1517 and 1530?
- What were the main differences between Protestant and Catholic ideas about:
  - the source of authority in religion
  - the way to gain salvation
  - the role and importance of the clergy
  - the needs of an individual Christian?