

<p>Henry VIII desperately needed a male heir to secure the Tudor dynasty after 20 years of marriage to Catherine of Aragon produced only one surviving daughter, Mary. He had become infatuated with Anne Boleyn, who promised him sons. Henry also convinced himself their marriage was cursed by God, citing a biblical passage (Leviticus 20:21) that prohibited marrying one's brother's widow - Catherine had first been married to Henry's late brother Arthur.</p>	<p>Pope Clement VII was under control of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Catherine's nephew, whose troops had sacked Rome in 1527. The Pope couldn't annul a marriage that the previous pope had specially approved without undermining Church authority. Additionally, Catherine vehemently defended her marriage's validity, and there was no biblical justification for divorce - only annulment, which would declare Princess Mary illegitimate and risk angering Charles V further.</p>
<p>Through Parliament's 1534 Act of Supremacy, Henry declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England, breaking all ties with Rome. He appointed Thomas Cromwell to enforce this by requiring oaths of loyalty, executing dissenters like Thomas More, and sending royal inspectors to monitor clergy. The Church became a political tool - bishops like Cranmer supported Henry's divorce, while monasteries resisting reform were destroyed. Church taxes now went to the Crown.</p>	<p>Between 1536-1541, Henry's minister Thomas Cromwell systematically dissolved all 800+ English monasteries under the pretext of corruption. Monastic lands were confiscated, buildings dismantled for materials, and treasures seized for the royal treasury. About 15% of England's land changed hands, creating a new aristocracy loyal to Henry. Former monks received small pensions, while monastic hospitals and schools disappeared, causing social upheaval that led to the Pilgrimage of Grace rebellion.</p>
<p>The Tudor dynasty was newly established after the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487), where rival noble factions fought over the crown. Henry feared a daughter's rule would revive these conflicts, as medieval England had never accepted a queen regnant. Foreign powers like Spain might exploit female rule to claim England. Henry also believed only a king could lead armies and maintain the Reformation against potential Catholic crusades from Europe.</p>	