

What anglican  
church? these are the  
questions



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What happened that caused such an abrupt move in the Church of England towards a reformation in the 16th century? Why did the church change hands from Catholic to Protestant so many times? Finally, how did the church become a middle of the road church that most were able to accept as the Anglican Church? These are the questions I hope to answer in this short paper on the Reformation of the Church of England during the sixteenth century as we take a quick peek at the influential rulers of that time period. From Henry VIII and the split with Rome to the middle of the road Anglican Church of Elizabeth I, we see a new and separate church evolve from that of Rome. The abrupt move in the Church of England towards a reformation started out in a much different manner than in continental Europe. It had come about mainly for reasons to do with Henry VIII attempts to gain an annulment from his first wife Katherine. 1 Henry VIII did not simply seek an annulment for his own personal gratification in the need or want for a new wife, but that he was in desperate need for a successor to the royal throne. 2The marriage of Henry VIII and Katherine had remained fruitless in the attempts to produce a male heir to the English Royal Throne, with Henry believing that a curse listed in the Book of Leviticus stating that a man who marries his brother's wife will not be able to produce children from this nuptial and the only surviving to this point had been his daughter Mary. 3 Having that Katherine had been previously married for a short time to Henry's brother Prince Arthur, who died within months of their marriage, he used this as a means to seek an annulment from the marriage and sought the then pope Clement VII to declare the marriage void. 4 Henry had a trust and a belief that the papacy in Rome would grant him the annulment that he

sought and it may have happened if it had not been for really bad timing. 5 The pope was under the control of the Holy Roman Emperor, who just happened to be the nephew of his wife Katherine of whom he was seeking the annulment from. 6 Although the pope tried to appease all parties involved, it failed through the use of stalling in the courts and turned down proposals by Queen Katherine herself whom no longer recognized the jurisdiction of the English courts and claimed that she and Arthur had never consummated the marriage in the first place giving little validity to the claim Henry was making for reasons of annulment.

7The failure to be granted his most sought after annulment brought some hesitation to the king, but under a new direction with the help of his minister Thomas Cromwell he was able to set up a new arena to legitimize his separation from the queen by installing himself as a kind of pope in his own right of the Church of England. 8 Thomas Cramner was assigned as the archbishop of Canterbury and with the kings eyes as well as a few other anatomical items now looking towards the sister of Katherine, Anne Boleyn who was now impregnated, the whole assignment of annulment needed to be hastened to assure legitimacy. 9 Cramners archiepiscopal court was conveyed as the highest and one true court in dealings with religion under the Act of Appeals which totally shut out any links between Rome and the Church of England. 10 In May of 1533, the much sought after annulment was granted by Cramner who acted as more or less a puppet serving the kings needs, and thus a separation from Rome was fully complete with the needs being met now at home. 11 The results of the pregnancy of Anne Boleyn were yet another daughter for Henry VIII.

12 With still no heir to the English throne he wed several more times with only one producing a son. The son would become the next King of England as Edward VI, followed by his eldest daughter Mary, and the daughter that was produced in the union with Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth. 13Aside