

Wolsley (1475-1530) had been elevated to the cardinalate in 1515 and had been designated papal legate in 1518. He combined some aspects of spirituality with considerable political finesse and had the favor of both king and pope. Knowing his influence in Rome, Henry commissioned Wolsey to intercede with the pope and gain the granting of an annulment of his marriage to Catherine. Henry felt it justified on the basis of the protest he had earlier signed and Wolsey apparently thought he was right in this ground. In 1529 Wolsey was seeking this relief for Henry.

Henry had no reason to think the pope would decline. in fact it seemed open and shut. But the pope was in a difficult position and suggested bigamy as an easier answer! The commissioners of Wolsey conveyed this to Henry...and the latter saw it as no solution. Henry had also contemplated legitimatizing a son (the Duke of Richmond) and running the throne through that line but the death of this youth ended that. Divorce was the only way and time was running out. The fact that he was planning to marry Anne Boleyn was known to Wolsey and the pope, and the pope attempted to alter his plans on the concept that Anne was an unacceptable person. But Henry had his mind set on annulment and divorce and no alternative seemed reasonable.

The pope at this time was Clement VII. He would have helped Henry immediately but for one small thing: he had betrayed the Emperor (Charles V) in Charles' recent campaign with the Lutherans and Charles' armies had sacked Rome and were still on the threshold. Catherine of Aragon was an aunt to the Emperor and he held her in high esteem...his estimate of her integrity put her just a notch below Mary. In such a setting there was no way that Clement could grant Henry an annulment which would disgrace the honored aunt of the emperor. Clement pleaded for time; Wolsey pleaded for time. But no resolution was forthcoming. Henry turned on Wolsey and in 1530 confiscated his estate and property and brought him to trial. A somewhat untimely death was all that saved Wolsey from the executioner. Henry's problem was not yet solved, but he had demonstrated how the favor of kings is a very fickle thing.

An apparent solution to the marriage problem seems to have come from Thomas Cranmer, humanist, lecturer and churchman at Cambridge. The idea was that, since the marriage had not been a lawful consummation, there was no need of papal support for remission. Henry himself could declare it null and void and could