

Henry VIII of England

- King from 1509 to 1547 CE
 - Inherited a kingdom which enjoyed both unity and sound finances
- Six wives as he searched for a male heir
 - To escape his first marriage, Henry set himself against the Pope and so began the Reformation of the Church in England whereby it broke away from Rome and the English monarch became its supreme head

Six Wives of Henry VIII

- Henry, perpetually in search of a male heir, went through an incredible six wives. These, and the children they bore, were:
- Catherine of Aragon (m. June 1509 CE) - Mary (b. Feb. 1516 CE)
- Anne Boleyn (m. Jan. 1533 CE) - Elizabeth (b. Sep. 1533 CE)
- Jane Seymour (m. May 1536 CE) - Edward (b. Oct. 1537 CE)
- Anne of Cleves (m. Jan. 1540 CE)
- Catherine Howard (m. July 1540 CE)
- Catherine Parr (m. July 1543 CE)
- The English king's first marriage to Catherine of Aragon (an extremely popular public figure because of her formality and piety) produced six children but all except one died in infancy. The sole survivor was Mary, born on 18 February 1516 CE.
 - Henry had an illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond (b. 1519 CE), with a mistress, one Elizabeth Blount but that was not much use to a king who craved a recognised heir.
 - Henry used the fact that he produced a son to a different woman as evidence that he wasn't the problem in the relationship
 - The king began looking for a new wife and he found his ideal candidate in Anne Boleyn, younger sister of one of the king's former conquests.
 - Anne insisted on marrying the king before any thoughts could be entertained of raising a family. Henry's problem, then, was how to relieve himself of Catherine, an issue known as the king's 'great matter'.
- The solution seemed to be a letter to the Pope suggesting that the lack of a male heir was God's punishment for Henry marrying the wife of his late brother, a point supported by the Old Testament (the 'Prohibition of Leviticus', Leviticus 20:21).
 - Consequently, the king wished for the Pope to annul the marriage. Unfortunately for Henry, Pope Clement VII (r. 1523-1534 CE) was keen to keep good favour with the most powerful ruler in Europe at the time, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V of Spain (r. 1519-1556 CE), who was, significantly, the nephew of Catherine.
 - Further, it was unlikely that Catherine and Arthur, being so young at the time, had ever slept together and so the 'Prohibition of Leviticus' did not in this case apply.
 - The Pope at least sent Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio to England to investigate the matter and preside over a special court in June 1529 CE. Here both Catherine, determined to stay queen, and Henry, determined to get himself a new queen, presented their respective cases.
 - Despite Campeggio's efforts, nothing was resolved. Henry's next

tactic was to permanently separate Catherine from her daughter Mary and shift her about the country to various dilapidated residences.

- Meanwhile, Henry and Anne Boleyn lived together (but did not sleep together). Sometime in December 1532 CE, Anne, perhaps seeing a baby as the best way to rid herself of her rival Catherine, did sleep with the king and became pregnant. There would be serious repercussions regarding the Church but eventually, Henry had his marriage annulled the next year. Catherine then died of cancer in January 1536 CE.
- With Anne Boleyn, often known as 'Anne of a thousand days' for her brief reign as queen of the king's heart, Henry had a second daughter, Elizabeth, born on 7 September 1533 CE.
 - However, when the king discovered that Anne had had an affair and his eye had been caught by his next wife, he ordered her execution. The charge, and others ranging from incest to witchcraft, were trumped up because Anne had not produced a healthy male sibling to accompany Elizabeth and the king had tired of their turbulent relationship.
 - Anne was found guilty and executed at the Tower of London in May 1536 CE.
 - A few weeks later Henry married his third wife, Jane Seymour, a lady-in-waiting at court, and she finally gave the king a son, Edward, born on 12 October 1537 CE. The long-awaited arrival of a male heir sparked off gun salutes, bell-ringing and banquets across England. Tragically, Jane died shortly after and Henry genuinely mourned her passing; of all his wives it is significant that this was the one he wished to be buried alongside.

(Bryan, skip over the next three points, based on time.)

- Anne of Cleves (daughter of the Duke of the German Duchy of that name) was wife number four but she displeased the English king - he had been misled by an overly flattering portrait of her by Hans Holbein the Younger before they had met in person. Henry married her anyway but, rudely calling her the 'Flanders mare', changed his mind a few months later and they divorced by mutual consent on 9 July 1540 CE. Anne was relieved to escape with her life but Henry gave her a generous allowance, enough to live the high life until her death in 1557 CE.
- Wife number five was Catherine Howard, then only a teenager and another lady-in-waiting at court that had caught the king's eye. Catherine suffered the same fate as Anne Boleyn when she, too, was accused of having an extramarital affair with a member of the court, one Thomas Culpeper, and an incriminating love letter was produced at her hearing before Parliament. Catherine was executed in the Tower of London in February 1542 CE.
- The sixth and final wife was Catherine Parr, already a two-time widow. Catherine, then in her thirties, was a more mature lady than her immediate predecessors, and perhaps because of this, the marriage was a success and the family home a happy one. Catherine outlived Henry but died from complications of childbirth in September 1548 CE.

The Church of England

- Henry was a keen scholar of theology and he had no intention of leaving such an important institution as the Church to its own devices.
 - The king wrote a treatise which attacked Lutheranism and was rewarded by the Pope honouring him in 1521 CE with the title 'Defender of the Faith' (*fidei defensor* - the F.D. still appears on U.K. coins today).
 - Relations turned sour, though, when Henry wanted his marriage to his first wife Catherine of Aragon annulled and the king blamed both the Pope and Wolsey for the lack of progress in the matter. Wolsey was eventually accused of treason but he died on his way to trial in 1530 CE. When Thomas Cromwell took over the case, Henry's will was pushed to its logical conclusion: England would run its own Church free from the obligations of Rome.
 - Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury formally annulled Henry's first marriage in May 1533 CE (although Henry and Anne Boleyn had married in secret a few months earlier). This annulment and Parliament's passing of the Act of Succession (30 April 1534 CE) meant that Catherine's daughter Mary was declared illegitimate. Anne Boleyn was crowned queen in June and her daughter Elizabeth, born in September 1533 CE, was thus recognised as the king's official heir.
 - Henry was excommunicated by the Pope for his actions but by now the whole affair had taken on a significance far beyond royal marriages.
- In order to replace the Pope as head of the Catholic Church *in* England, Henry made himself Supreme Head of the Church *of* England. This was achieved by the Act of Supremacy of 28 November 1534 CE and meant that Henry, and all subsequent English monarchs, only had one higher authority: God himself.
- The next scene in this momentous drama came in 1536 CE when Henry presented Parliament with a bill to abolish all monasteries in his kingdom, the Dissolution of the Monasteries.
 - The bill was passed and the estates of the monasteries were redistributed to the Crown and Henry's supporters. The abbots of Glastonbury, Colchester, Reading, and Woburn were all hanged and the last monastery to close was Waltham Abbey in Essex in March 1540 CE.
- A good many subjects were keen to see reform in the Church of England and so continue the Protestant Reformation movement that was sweeping across Europe.
 - Many regarded the Church as too rich and too full of priests abusing their position.
 - Certainly not everyone, however, was in agreement with Henry's break from the Pope. Consequently, there were both executions and uprisings.
 - Chief obstacle at court was Sir Thomas More (1478-1535 CE), Henry's former chancellor who disagreed with the divorce with Catherine and Henry's presumption to put himself above the Pope. More was executed for his beliefs in July 1535 CE.
- The most notable episode of unrest was in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire where Catholics gathered in protest in the so-called Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 CE. The king would brook no opposition, though, and 178 of the protestors, including their leader Robert Aske, were executed in June 1537 CE. Another move towards independence was the

king's approval for a translation of the Bible in English in 1539 CE. It is important to remember though, that Henry was not dead set on reforming the doctrine of the Church; his commitment to traditional Catholic practices such as mass, confession and clerical celibacy, is evidenced in the 1539 CE Act of Six Articles.

Death & Successor

- Henry VIII's health declined rapidly in his later years. The King of England suffered a badly ulcerated leg and was so overweight he had to be pushed around on a wheeled contraption. The king died on 28 January 1547 CE at Whitehall Palace in London, he was 55 years old. Henry was buried in Saint George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, next to his late third wife, Jane Seymour. Henry was succeeded by his son Edward VI, crowned in Westminster Abbey on 20 February 1547 CE. Edward was only nine and he would die of tuberculosis in 1553 CE aged 15. He was succeeded by another short-reigning monarch, his half-sister Mary I, who reigned until 1558 CE. Henry VIII's second daughter then became queen, Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603 CE) and with her in swept the Golden Age of England.

Information adapted from https://www.worldhistory.org/Henry_VIII_of_England/

Church of England Considers Gender-Neutral Language for God

The church said that God was neither male nor female and has asked a commission to explore how that is reflected in its services.

By Amanda Holpuch
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New York Times

The Church of England is considering whether to use gender-neutral terms to refer to God, a spokesperson said on Thursday, adding that there are no plans to “to abolish or substantially revise” the existing liturgy.

The church said in an emailed statement that Christians have recognized “since ancient times that God is neither male nor female.” The clergy is now weighing whether it could better reflect that in the language used in its services.

“The variety of ways of addressing and describing God found in scripture has not always been reflected in our worship,” the statement said. “There has been greater interest in exploring new language since the introduction of our current forms of service in contemporary language more than 20 years ago.”

The Anglican Church said its Liturgical commission, which prepares and advises on the church service, had been “regularly” considering this language since 2014. That commission has now asked another body, the Faith and Order Commission, which advises on theology, to examine the issue.

The church did not provide specifics on how the commission would work and did not provide a timeline for its findings.

“There are absolutely no plans to abolish or substantially revise currently authorized liturgies, and no such changes could be made without extensive legislation,” the church said.

In Christian denominations, God is often rendered with masculine pronouns in religious texts and prayers, though many theological scholars and leaders argue that God transcends gender. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “He is neither man nor woman: he is God.”

In 2018, the Church of England’s archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Justin Welby, said that God was neither male nor female. The archbishop is the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, which exists in the United States as the Episcopal Church, with 85 million members in 165 countries.

The question of God’s gender received renewed attention this week at a meeting of the Church of England’s governing body, the General Synod, in London.

At the meeting, the Rev. Joanna Stobart, vicar of Ilminster and Whitelackington in Somerset, asked for an update on establishing “more inclusive language” in service, P.A. Media reported.

A vice-chair of the Liturgical commission, the Rev. Michael Ipgrave, Bishop of Lichfield, responded that “a new joint project on gendered language will begin this spring,” according to the Press Association.

The Synod met as the Church of England faces decades of falling attendance.

In 2019, before in-person church services were suspended at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, there were 1.1 million “regular worshipers,” who went to church once a month or more, according to the Church of England.

In 2021, there were about 966,000 “regular worshipers,” roughly 1.7 percent of England’s population.

On Thursday, the Synod also voted in favor of a policy that would allow clergy members to recognize same-sex unions with acts such as prayers, after six years of consultations on same-sex marriage within the church. However, the church will continue to block same-sex couples from marrying in its churches

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/09/world/europe/england-church-gender-neutral-god.html>

