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## Queen's role as head of Church of England 'may no longer be appropriate'

The Queen's role as head of the Church of England may no longer be "appropriate" following changes to the law of succession, a group of MPs has suggested.



Under current laws, the Queen is required to 'join in communion' with the Church of England and take on the role of Supreme Governor, promoting Anglicanism in Britain Photo: PA

By Rowena Mason, Political Correspondent  
10:00PM GMT 06 Dec 2011

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Reforms agreed earlier this year by Commonwealth countries would create a potential conflict of interest because they allow a monarch to marry a Roman Catholic, said a parliamentary committee.

It said that if a future heir to the throne were raised as a Catholic, there would be an "obvious difficulty" in that person becoming head of the Anglican Church on their succession.

Under current laws, the **Queen** is required to "join in communion" with the Church of England and take on the role of Supreme Governor, promoting Anglicanism in Britain.

The report, by the political and constitutional reform committee, said: "The scenario does beg the question of whether it remains appropriate for the monarch to be required to be in communion with the Church of England.

"The most obvious difficulty in having a Catholic monarch – beyond the purely statutory obstacles – is the Crown's role as supreme governor of the Church of England." The MPs said that Parliament "may wish to consider" the current relationship between the monarch and the Church of England.

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Graham Allen, chairman of the committee, said the report was "leaving the door open for the Government if they want more change".

He added: "There could be more in this if the Government were prepared to ask us to go and delve into it a bit more."

A spokesman for the Church of England said: "You can't be Supreme Governor unless you are in communion with the Church of England.

"The sovereign should join in communion with the Church of England and it is integrally bound up with there continuing to be an established church, which is something that the Government has confirmed its commitment to."

Dr Robert Morris, a constitutional expert from University College London, told the committee that the monarch's role as Supreme Governor is essentially ceremonial.

Alex Salmond, the Scottish First Minister, is a strong advocate of changes to the law of succession that would allow Catholics to become King or Queen.

He has criticised "the unjustifiable barrier" and has called for "equality of all faiths when it comes to the issue of who can be head of state".

Changes to the laws on the succession were agreed this year shortly after the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Under the amendments, the first-born child of the monarch will now be able to accede to the throne, whether a girl or boy. This would allow a firstborn daughter of the Duke and Duchess to take priority in the line of succession.

The political and constitutional reform committee also drew attention to "the continued ineligibility of women to succeed to hereditary peerages".

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### In Queen Elizabeth II



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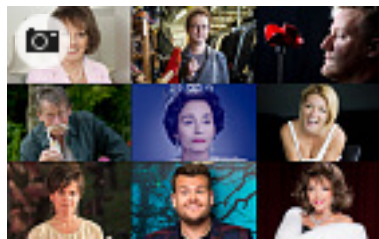
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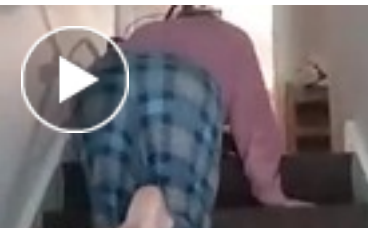
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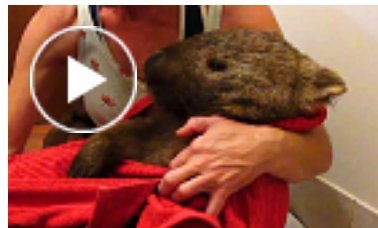
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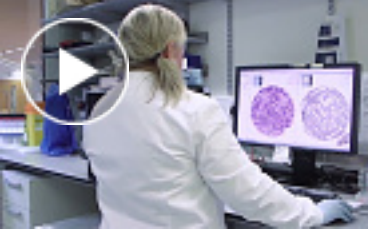
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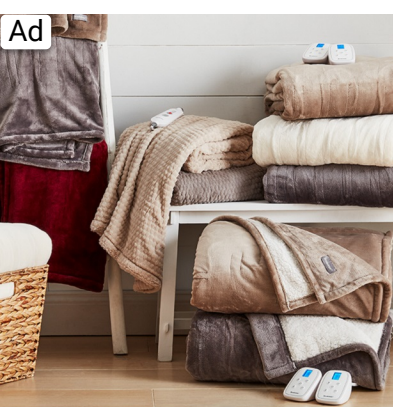
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