

THE CONSULTANT'S REPORT ON THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



Adrian Pepper



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on the
Church of England**

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By

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Adam Smith
London

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"The revenue of every established church, such parts of it
excepted as may arise from particular lands or manors, is a
branch, it ought to be observed, of the general revenue of the
state..."

Adam Smith
The Wealth of Nations
Book V, Chapter I, Part III

1. Introduction

In the 1980s, privatisation vastly changed the size and composition of the State. In the 1990s, the government is completing the privatisation agenda. It is breaking new ground as regards the management of the State itself. The concept of citizenship is replacing that of subjecthood as government attempts to make its remaining monopoly services more responsive to the consumer. The introduction of the Citizen's Charter underlines these attempts. John Major's commitment on becoming leader of the Conservative Party to 'constitutional evolution' has signalled that constitutional reform may be back on the agenda.

Despite the triumph of the ideas of economic liberalism, there remain differences of view concerning the values which a capitalist society must hold. Ideologically, the divide is between those who make a virtue only of economic freedom and those who see economic freedom as part of a more general freedom.

The second group believe that morality itself should be privatised, and all behavioural choices, economic or moral, should be left to the individual (provided, it is usually added, they do not harm others). It follows that the State should also play no role at all in religion, one of the key sources of moral values. This may upset those who, following Adam Smith, think capitalism demands a set of common moral values. Had Smith been alive today, he may have complained that religious organisations are often not forthright enough in urging moral standards upon the nation.

This report puts this debate into a practical context. It suggests a way of reconciling the two sides by taking account of the right of the individual to set his or her own moral standards, at the same time as giving religious groups and others the opportunity to spread their values more widely.

It examines whether, in a modern liberal society, one religious body should be given privileged status by the State and seeks to redefine religion's role within the framework of our unwritten constitution. It also presents a challenge to the Church of England and other religious and charitable organisations to take on functions which historically have belonged to them, but which have only relatively recently fallen within the competence of the secular State.

2. Religion, State and Society

Religious Markets

In a capitalist society the wishes of consumers are expressed through the marketplace. Apart from the remaining State monopolies, producer organisations generally have to compete to meet the demands of the consumer. There seems no limit to the complexity of service or goods that cannot be provided by organisations subject to market disciplines.

However invisible the product that religious organisations are marketing might be, production costs nevertheless remain. Most religious organisations are subject to the disciplines of the marketplace. They must not only satisfy the demands of their customers but also raise money from them in order to remain in business.

Some multinational religious organisations such as the Catholic Church have outlets (and therefore customers) all over the world. In some countries the Catholic Church faces tough competition, but in others it has a virtual monopoly on the domestic market. The Roman Catholic Church has been the single most successful multinational religious organisation in the modern world.

But religion is not only about faith, spirituality and a sense of belonging. It is also closely bound up with culture. For this reason, many religious groupings do not operate on a multinational level. The Church of England has de-merged from Rome, having been nationalised in the sixteenth century. In other words it has become established within the formal constitutional framework of English society.

The word 'establishment' signifies a formal, legal and technical linkage with the State. It is important to note that establishment of the Church of England has little to do with 'the Establishment', a phrase used to describe the real or imagined elite at the centre of public affairs. Popular misconceptions of active collusion with the social order and of leaders of the Church of England being part of the Establishment can often work against the Church, since to attack the Establishment is a very popular pastime for all those perceive themselves to be outside it.

The Religious Market in England

England's religious market is highly competitive. But there is one religious organisation in particular that is at a disadvantage in the religious marketplace. The Church of

England, like other nationalised industries, fails to respond to the demands of the consumer. Over the past few centuries, it has gradually lost its market share to better organised private sector religious organisations. Being owned by the State, it has little incentive to sell its product widely. Instead of responding to the consumer, it is dominated by producer interests.

Despite fierce competition, the religious market of the England still contains much unexploited potential. A majority of English have not yet bought into a church or religious group. Although organised religion is declining, there is no evidence to suggest that people today are any less interested today in matters spiritual. It is just that no religious body has been able to win there complete faith and confidence.

The reasons are part human and part English. English people, renowned for their skepticism, have deep-seated traits with which to come to terms before opting for a particular religion. They are born a subject of the Crown and a liege of the Crown. The Crown in theory has the power and right to direct and oversee the life of the Church of England; the subject has an obligation to attend and maintain the Church 'by law established'.

Although these two Tudor pillars have been modified down the centuries as a result of constitutional innovations, they remain the essential basis for the legal establishment of the Church of England. So long as the establishment of the Church within the State remains in place, there will continue to be a mix between English people's sense of Englishness and their religious sentiments. Other religious groups in English society will remain on an unequal footing with the Church of England, although their growing clamour to be put on an equal footing is unlikely to diminish.

Other churches and sects already outscore the established church in terms of Church attendance. Since the Church of England can no longer cater for the majority of regular worshippers, its special status and privileges must be brought into question.

Religion and Secular Power

Religious organisations do not only compete between each other as businesses for market share. Along with many other special interest groups, they compete for power within the political marketplace. At times religious bodies will be at least as vocal as any trade union or pressure group in condemning the actions of the government. In doing that, they compete for power against the State.

In Britain, the Mrs Thatcher's government was frequently rebuked by the churchmen of many denominations. By winning public opinion over to the values which they propagated, churchmen sought to use the pressure of public opinion to wield political power. That power is more threatening when its source is unconnected to the State, because it is more easily identified by public opinion and harder for the government to discipline.

But when an organisation becomes part of the State, as the Church of England did in the sixteenth century, it can be dominated by the State. The result of this is a decline in its influence. Henry VIII's nationalisation of the Church enabled him to remove the threat that it posed to him. The regional managers of the Church, the Bishops, were required to swear allegiance to the Monarch in Parliament. The State today can still be said to own the Church of England. That fact alone prevents it from flourishing. Conversely, Islamic fundamentalism owns the state in Iran. That prevents the realm of the secular from flourishing.

Certainly the conflict between Church and State, as Lord Acton pointed out, helped to preserve liberty in England in the four centuries following the Norman Conquest. The power of each contending party checked the other as both sought to attract the people to their cause: "If the Church had continued to buttress the thrones of the kings whom it anointed, or if the struggle had terminated speedily in an undivided victory, all Europe would have sunk down under a Byzantine or Muscovite despotism. For the aim of both contending parties was absolute authority. But although liberty was not the end for which they strove, it was the means by which the temporal and the spiritual power called the nations to their aid."

3. The Church in History

Before the Reformation

Ever since Constantine adopted Christianity as the Roman Empire's official religion, the church has played a powerful role in the affairs of European nations. Along with trade, Christianity has been one of the principal integrating forces within European society. For a millennium, Christianity was viewed as the legitimator of State authority. Only in the last few centuries have the people sought to take on the role of legitimator through the mechanism of democracy.

The long history of the relationship between Church and State in England has its roots in the arrival of Augustine, the envoy of Pope Gregory, in Kent in 597. The seeds of Christianity were first sown with the conversion of Ethelbert that year and with the establishment of the cathedral church of Canterbury. In the early years Christianity in England depended for its progress on the faith of the King whose temporal authority could have at any time snuffed Christianity from the isles (and almost did until the second Archbishop Laurentius was stopped 'by a miracle' from fleeing to Gaul).

By 650, the Roman mission had Christianised Kent and Wessex. But it is to the Scots that we owe the evangelisation of the greater part of the English people, who until the Synod of Whitby in 664 were more influential than the Romans in church affairs across England. The debate which led to the decision at Whitby to unify the English church along Roman lines was the first of a series of conflicts between indigenous and Roman traditions. Much mediaeval political controversy involved monarchical efforts to restrain the theocratic pretensions of successive pontiffs.

Monarchs saw themselves as ecclesiastical patrons, and as such they were drawn into a number of demarcation disputes with the papacy. From the time of the Danish invasions, the organisations of Church and State were closely interwoven but remained officially separate. The bishops became mere nominees of the King, although the form of election by the Bishop's Church was retained. By the eleventh century a bishop was consecrated in obedience to a royal writ, and was invested with the insignia of his office by the King.

The clash between the temporal and spiritual powers was set to continue, and English freedom owes much to the check exerted by the Church upon the State. Anselm heroically defied the authority of William Rufus on a range of contentious issues: money for the William's war with his brother Robert; filling vacant abbeys; and the fetching of the pall (which allowed the bishop to exercise metropolitan authority) from Pope

Urban. In 1107, two years before his death, Anselm demonstrated the increased power of the Church by reaching agreement with King Henry on the question of investitures -- a compromise which was a model for the Concordat of Worms in 1122 between Pope and Emperor on the same subject.

Competition between Church and State for secular power became particularly intense in Henry II's confrontation with Beckett. The argument reached its high point with the row over the 1164 Constitution of Clarendon, drawn up by a committee of Henry's barons outlining the ancient customs of the realm so far as they concerned the relations between Church and State. The mediaeval clashes between the spiritual and temporal powers contributed to the development of the body of English common law which defined the rights and duties of citizens with reference to immemorial custom and which heralded the rise of English liberty.

The Break with Rome

From the fourteenth century onwards, papal influence went into decline, under attack most notably from Wycliffe and the Lollards in England. By the fifteenth century, the papacy was completely secularised and became little more than an Italian temporal power, with the papal court becoming a centre of humanism. Against this background, the Henrician Reformation, which resolved the conflict between Church and State on the monarch's terms, can be regarded as the climax to an already established trend of Church decline.

Although it was not until Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 that the Act of Supremacy formally provided the legal apparatus for the Church's establishment, Henry VIII had to all intents and purposes brought the Church under the monarch control in 1533. The Submission of the Clergy Act, the Appointment of Bishops Act, the Suffragen Bishops Act were all passed during Henry's reign. The binding of the church to the nation was later cemented by the Acts of Uniformity.

The break with Rome was not clean. It opened the floodgates to more general theological questionings, leading ultimately to end the Anglican spiritual monopoly in England. Diverse theological trends found their political standard bearers and catalysed a far reaching process of religious pluralisation. Efforts to put the clock back, for example during Mary's reign, merely stoked up durable anti-Papal sentiment among sections of English society.

The reformation not only lost the Church its theological independence but also its influence over temporal affairs. Parliament took its place as the principal check on monarchical power. Indeed, Parliament's initial role in legitimising the monarch's personal supremacy, within both Church and State, gave rise to later conflicts over the respective jurisdictions of Crown and legislature. By the end of the seventeenth century, Parliament had asserted its authority successfully in both spheres. The legislature retained sovereignty over the Church and State until the twentieth century. (Parliament's effec-

tiveness as a check on executive power has since diminished, owing to the growth of the modern State and its merger with eleven other countries of Western Europe. Parliament still has sovereignty over many Church affairs.)

Church-State Tension

State intervention in spiritual life since the nationalisation of the Church has been destructive to the Anglican following at almost every turn. The victors of the English Civil War were divided over whether to impose a Presbyterian form of ecclesiastical monopoly or whether, as Cromwell intended, limited forms of religious toleration were to be permitted. The pendulum swung again after the restoration, when Royal patronage was employed to infiltrate 'Laudians' into senior ecclesiastical posts and acceptance of the 1662 Prayer Book was made the test for admission to public life. The Roman Catholic James II's brief attempt to impose the monarch's religion upon the people was yet another upheaval, provoking the 'Glorious Revolution' and the accession of William and Mary. The result was widespread disaffection with the National Church, with religious pluralism becoming an ineradicable feature of English life.

Further State intervention in the nineteenth century (for example, the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Commission) was to prompt a resurgence of High Church theology led by the Tractarians and the Oxford Movement. This movement sought, in effect, to erect banners against the claims of secular authorities deemed to have trespassed on 'sacred' ground lying outside their legitimate jurisdiction. The Oxford Movement's Anglo-Catholic successors helped pave the way for a greater degree of Church self-government by asserting a more distinctively ecclesiastical identity in relation to State and nation.

Since the Reformation the most effective contribution towards the control of State authority was made by the minority churches. They struggled first for freedom of speech, discussion and association. Out of this success, political toleration of those holding differing religious faiths arose, leading to the repeal of the Test Acts in 1829. From this point onwards, the Church and State were no longer coterminous, since access to the State was no longer strictly reliant upon belonging to the nation's Church. The spread of minority religious groups led to different religious frameworks legitimating different political stances and to the dispersal of power in a society with an ever richer institutional life. In the words of Neville Figgis, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, 'Political liberty is the fruit of ecclesiastical animosity'.

As the nonconformist movement wielded more power over the political landscape, the Church of England took the first tentative steps towards running its own affairs, clutching power away from the hands of the State. In 1903, a representative Church Council was created. This was the forerunner of the Church Assembly created by the Enabling Act of 1919. The present General Synod replaced the Church Assembly in 1970 and now passes its uncontentious legislation without State interference.

Nevertheless, the monarch still remains Supreme Governor of the Church of England with the power to make Church appointments on the advice of Crown Appointments Commission and Prime Minister. Parliament has the ultimate sanction over Church legislation and over the Church Commissioners who are accountable to the legislature through a Member of Parliament answering on their behalf. It is, at the time of writing, still unclear whether there will be Parliamentary interference in the controversial decision of the General Synod to ordain women. There remains plenty of scope for tension between the established Church and the secular organs of the State.

4. The Church Today

Declining Attendance

The Church of England's active congregation has declined from its high point of 27 million people in England to only 1.1 million today. Even amongst Christians, Anglicans are now in a churchgoing minority with only 2.4% of the population attending normal Sunday Church of England services. Even the numbers of communicants at Christmas and Easter has fallen from over 2 million in 1960 to only 1.5 million in 1990. At its current rate of decline, the Church of England will not exist by the end of the twenty-first century.

The Church of England has long since lost its position as the country's market leader in religion. At one end of the Christian spectrum, nonconformist evangelicalism is rising and looks set to continue to rise; at the other, Roman Catholicism looks set to gain disciples from the controversial decision by the Church of England to ordain women. Already, there are fewer regular Anglican churchgoers than Roman Catholics in England.

A Divided Front

The Church of England has failed to define its role in English society. Although the Church has accepted the multi-faith society, it continues to pretend to be the Church of the nation and guardian of the nation's morals. The spread of forms of Christian worship is reflected within the Church of England itself. The 'broad church' of views represented within the Church has resulted in a loss of branding. An organisation for all sorts of religious beliefs is unlikely to be capable of inspiring loyalty or of possessing easily identifiable spiritual significance.

There are roughly three theological factions in the General Synod of the Church of England: a small Anglo-Catholic wing which often goes into alliance with the rapidly growing evangelicals (half of all new priests describe themselves as such), and the liberals of varying degrees of liberalism. The theological divisions have put the Church in a dilemma: on the one hand, tolerance of various theological standpoints results in loss of identity and clarity of purpose; on the other, lack of tolerance can result in an even smaller following. The Church has yet to resolve this dilemma, although the decision by the General Synod in November 1992 to ordain women indicates that it is prepared to take controversial theological decisions at the risk of alienating significant sections of its clergy and congregation.

The message of the Church of England is often obscured by internal and external disputes. Despite the political blows which the Church has struck for liberty since the arrival of Christianity in England, it has engaged in a large degree of political involvement -- from 'ban the bomb' to the publication of the controversially collectivist *Faith in the City* report. The volume of direct political involvement in which the Church has taken part has undermined its image as a body concerned above all to propagate religion to ever larger congregations. Perhaps it should be protecting its own core market before diversifying into the political realm.

A consequence of greater emphasis on the social and political rather than the supernatural dimension of the Church is obfuscation of its theological message. The advertisement on Central Television encouraging people to follow the Church because 'It's fun!' is a pertinent example. It is fine to stress the social aspects of Church involvement as long as the Church itself does not lose sight of its central purpose of spreading the Gospel.

Bureaucracy

In many ways the administrative structure of the Church of England resembles a modern State bureaucracy, suffering from the same problems. The Church bureaucracy is widely acknowledged to be overstaffed and top heavy, with too many staff working in clerical jobs and too few working on the ground. Like all public sector bureaucracies, it suffers from 'empire-building' elements, responding to the demands of the most vociferous interest groups, many of which do not represent the average churchgoer.

The attempt to reduce manning levels in the Church of England meets with more resistance than it encounters in private sector churches. In Methodism, Baptism and even Islam in England, bureaucracies have to be sustained by their customers or else perish. Private sector religions must be competitive and occasionally cut manning levels. Only recently has the Church of England woken up to this fact, as the organisation has declined. It can no longer rely on its nationalised status as the ultimate guarantee of job security. The Church has now declined to such an extent that the concept of one priest per parish is gone. But that is not because more Churches are being opened. Over the last twenty years, the Church of England has demolished almost three hundred churches and closed another nine hundred.

At the base-line is the fact that the administration of the Church of England does not operate like the administration of other churches, nor does it achieve their levels of efficiency, because it does not have to. It faces few of the penalties which fall upon inefficiency in the private sector, and faces instead pressures which lead to expansion of staff and extension of function. The motivations of those in the Church of England and other churches may be similar, but the rules and conditions which prevail in each are so different that variant outcomes are produced.

There are basically two separate administrative structures in the Church of England. First, there is the traditional hierarchical structure staffed by the professionals with the clergy at the bottom and the bishops at the top. Second, there is the representative and administrative system of synods, boards and committees. The two often intertwine in terms of function, which can create much red tape. The complexity of the rules governing the administrative structure makes running the Church a difficult proposition. Effective operation is prevented by endless meetings, delays and referrals.

The Church of England fails to attract more customers because it is not subject to the pressures of churches in the private sector. The opportunities for greater sales remain. The fact that it provides prison, workplace, and hospital chaplains gives it good access to potential recruits. But a cumbersome bureaucracy prevents it from adapting to meet the challenges posed to it by the consumer. The core message of the Church, although frequently the subject of theological debate, is tried and tested over centuries, and there is nothing inherently wrong with it as a market brand. The problem of low sales stems from its inefficient organisation and lack of marketing strategy.

The Church is arguably more difficult to lead today than at any time in its history. Putting one's faith in God alone is not enough when practical circumstances such as falling congregations, potential schism, Parliamentary interference, and bleeding finances demand other qualities from Church leaders. Political cunning, business acumen, effortless charm and sharp intellect are some of the qualities with which the National Church needs invigoration. Subject to market pressures, these would be improved, and the Church would find itself in a position to undertake many more functions than it currently even prays of being able to provide.

The fact that the Church has so few communicants demonstrates its failure to reach out to those whom it would have attracted several generations ago. The Church is not marketing its product well enough and as a result there is little demand for religion by potential consumers. If establishment within the State is part of the cause of the Church's decline, then disestablishment is part of the solution to its revival. Subjecting the Church to market pressures would enable it to reform its structures of bureaucracy, finance and accountability.

5. The Church and Society

The Growth of Secularism

There are many faiths in England today, most notably atheism and agnosticism. The dramatic collapse of the social significance of religion over this century prompts the question as to whether English society can now be regarded as secular. Archbishop Habgood defines a secular society as 'one in which organised religion is treated as being of only marginal significance, a private pastime for those who like that sort of thing'. The majority of English people do treat religion in this fashion for almost all of their lives, and would therefore by definition regard their society as a secular society. Only when religion touches directly on these people's lives do they catch its significance -- at funerals for instance.

A large degree of apathy towards Christianity, and the Church of England in particular, has set in. This is especially true of the younger generation. A MORI poll in 1991 found that 57 per cent of 18-24 year olds could not say even what happened on Good Friday and 62 per cent did not know who Pontious Pilate was. Although the conservative nature of Englishmen leads them to base their moral values upon many of the fundamental tenets of Church doctrine, England at large has no deep Christian understanding. Received truths of the Church are increasingly questioned. Recent examples include the emphasis placed by academic works upon Jesus the historical figure as opposed to Jesus the Biblical figure, and the open ridicule of traditional conceptions of God portrayed in satirical magazines and television programmes.

Popular superstitions connected with the Church are becoming marginalised. Baptism is less common, and often it is seen as a ritual rather than a deeply religious ceremony. More weddings are taking place in Registry offices rather than churches; where they are held in Church, it is often because of the glamour attached to a 'white' wedding rather than the reverence attached to wedding vows which are broken with a growing frequency. Christmas is celebrated as a holiday rather than as a Holy Day, and Easter treated as a convenient break from work. The origins of the Whitsun bank holiday are probably less widely understood than the origins of the socialist-inspired May Day bank holiday (soon to be abolished).

English people who see the Church as irrelevant to their lives are still treated as members of it by the State unless they have consciously chosen another religion to follow. There is no opting for atheism or agnosticism in the armed services, for example ('If you don't know what you are, you're C of E'). Practices such as this stem from the fact that the Church of England is the Church of the State. They are in reality more

upsetting for genuine believers who are members of the Church of England than for those who take no interest in religion.

A Plural Society

It may be somewhat ironic that the increasing secularisation of society has precipitated diversity in Church doctrine and Christian faiths. As the demand for organised religion has fallen, churches have sought to vary their stances in order to gain the following of different groups within society. Thus, pluralism of faith has become commonplace both inside and outside the Church of England at the prompting of religious leaders. The growth of minority sects is striking because it shows that there is a certain suppressed demand for religious guidance. If the Non-Trinitarian churches can increase their membership from 220,000 in 1970 to 450,000 today, then it appears that there is something deficient in the methods used by the Church of England to attract churchgoers.

However, it would be unfair to say that pluralism in England has been entirely producer-led. There has always been a sense in which individuals have had to choose whether, or how far, to commit themselves to a particular religious faith -- and in earlier times -- the costs involved in doing so. It is not religious choice as such which sets modern England apart from the past, but the wide range of available options. The fact that there are more goods on display in today's religious supermarket, with more individual choice on offer, has undermined the Anglican Church's home brand and its claim to represent the English public at large.

Britain has always been a culturally diverse nation: from the Romans to the Vikings, and from the Normans to refugees from Hitler's Germany. Immigration from countries of the former Empire has brought significant ethnic minorities into English society. Many of those who have relatively recently come to Britain are determined to retain their religious beliefs and identity. The Church of England's place and purpose means little to them. Those who practise non-established religions, perhaps out of insecurity and fear of hostility, acquiesce to the Church of England's position. They might find themselves far more psychologically healthy if they openly admitted that the establishment of the Church of England offends them deeply.

The Church itself has embraced pluralism and multiculturalism as a permanent feature of English society. *The logic of diversity of faiths is that in terms of their claims to truth, the law should treat them all equally.* To give the Church of England privileges above all other sects and to identify it with our nationhood is to favour one set of individuals in the country over and above others purely on the basis of religious belief.

A by-product of the establishment of the Church of England has been the infection of secular law with Church doctrines to which the majority no longer adhere. Although the nineteenth century saw some Church-influenced law such as the Test Acts being repealed and the 1857 divorce law showdown, other iniquities remain. One example is the law of blasphemy. The only doctrine of God protected from assault by law is the

doctrine of the Church of England, and there seems to be no national interest in preserving that unique exemption. Not only does the law of blasphemy discriminate against other claims of religious truth, but it also discriminates against claims to truth in the secular world.

The 1987 Education Reform Act also demonstrates the special place of Christianity in our law. Some clauses in the legislation cause great difficulties for headteachers whose schools have substantial numbers of children of Asian (and hence non-Christian) origin. To argue that substantial minorities should accept the spiritual values of the majority is to discriminate against the minority. There are many values which Englishmen hold most dear to themselves, not all of them recognisable under the flag of faith and few of them protected under law.

A striking incidence resulting from the pluralism of modern society is the extent to which religious groups of different denominations and faiths are prepared to work alongside one another in the community. Many churches and charities, for example, work together in inner London seeking to alleviate the problems of homelessness. This approach is to be welcomed and is perhaps an indicator of the underlying strength of religious organisations in terms of their ability to make a favourable impact as far as solving some of society's problems is concerned.

Alongside greater cooperation between churches in the field of the relief of human suffering, there has been a rise in spiritual cooperation. Ecumenism has enabled Christians of many denominations to share in worship. In so doing, they recognise the validity of variant interpretations of the same Christian religion and treat each other as equals, all sharing in the same God. Through the acceptance of ecumenism, the Church of England demonstrates that it is only on a par with other denominations in terms of its claim to religious truth.

Different Christian Churches have gathered together under the guise of the British Council of Churches, giving Christianity as a whole far greater representation in society than the Church of England has been able to do alone. It is anachronistic for there to be only one Church with direct links to the State, against a background of a society in which there are many Christian and other faiths, all of which may cherish some influence within secular society. By working, debating and worshipping alongside other denominations, the Church of England has itself undermined the concept of an official religious morality, the implementation of which was once a prime objective. The concept of an official religious morality is increasingly at odds with ethnic pluralism and greater secularisation.

A Church for the Nation?

Chief among the arguments of those who wish the Church to remain bonded to the State is that it has a residual responsibility to the large number of people in society claiming a Christian

commitment, who live on the Church's margins, yet identify themselves as Anglican. It is thus a National Church, and so should remain established.

The Church of England did grow as a National Church, in the sense that it aimed to express the spiritual life of all society. It did aim to be a genuine 'folk church' which exerted influence throughout society's institutions and its many avenues of life. It was not originally a church which merely sought to serve a particular section of society. Even if being a National Church had conferred the right to be established, the fact is that today the influence of the Church has waned to such an extent that it can no longer be described as a National Church. Whether or not the Church of England is a National Church is irrelevant to the debate about disestablishment. The argument for a National Church is an argument in favour of seeking to expand one's congregation -- something which as an established body the Church of England has singularly failed to do.

Disestablishment would sever an institutional link which has long been an anachronism. The responsibility for bringing the residual populace, whose religion is inarticulate and submerged, into the fold would not have to be sidelined after disestablishment. The Church would remain the Church of England, with dioceses and churches all over the country, and a claim to moral and spiritual truth which it could seek to spread ever wider.

It is far from clear whether the Church of England is really committed to marketing itself to attract more communicants. In recent years there has been a growing incidence of clergy who are not prepared to administer baptisms and wedding ceremonies to those who are not regular and faithful church attenders. There is a difference between choosing a faith and belonging to a culture. Establishment seeks to fuse the two, so that essentially cultural rituals are confused with the religion of Christianity, which demands an active and personal assent.

There is therefore a valid case for viewing the Church of England as a 'gathered church' rather than a church which seeks to cater for the whole community. Ultra-montanism was dropped after the Reformation, and Church membership appears more selective as congregations continue to shrink. If it were disestablished, the Church would be able to decide for itself whether it should be composed of a small elite remnant of devout followers representing the rest of the people to God, or whether it should be a broad-based Church open to all people in the nation or even beyond it.

Some who wish to see the preservation of the status quo have asserted that individual members of the Church enjoy the many freedoms which establishment confers on members of the Church, and that these would be lost if disestablishment were to take place. But the fact is that Church as a corporate body would be more free after disestablishment, with members of the Church continuing to enjoy the rights and privileges to which membership entitles them.

The current position denies rights and privileges to non-Anglicans. British citizens who are not members of the Anglican Church are not full citizens, for the Crown and Par-

liament still have functions relating to the Church of England which do not and cannot concern them. By virtue of the Church's special status, non-Anglicans are implicitly rendered foreigners in their own country, unable to assert their democratic rights to have a Parliament no longer used for the church's own sectarian purposes. Indeed the subtle imposition of second class citizenship on minorities and newcomers is the essence of the racism which the Church so vehemently opposes in other fields.

A special legal status does not automatically make an institution more open to new members. There would probably be no sudden or revolutionary change in the religious ethos of the Church if it were to be disestablished. The only likely change in ethos, as far as the specifically religious aspect of the Church of England is concerned, would be a reduction in the arrogance of some clergy towards other denominations, which results from the Church of England's 'special' current status. Establishment can breed smugness, self-satisfaction and a delusions of grandeur which rightly rile non-conformists.

Advocates of establishment claim that the Church of England is part of the fabric of the nation and so should not be touched. The claim is that if we were to remove this structure of our national life the whole edifice might come crashing down; the establishment of the Church of England must be maintained to enable it to take a moral lead in public life; otherwise social cohesion would be threatened.

This claim ignores the reality that State control of the Church diminishes its claim to moral independence in the eyes of many members of society. Indignation towards its privileged status is more likely to promote moral and social incohesion than remove it. When we reform other structures of our national life, by market-testing Civil Service functions or deregulating the market in television, society does not suddenly break down. It is largely unquestioned assumptions and shared human values which hold societies together. Institutions often reflect these. They do not have to be publicly owned in order to do so.

6. The Church and the State

Power Without Consent

It is in the reflection of the nation's values where the Church of England has most difficulty in justifying its continued establishment. For an institution to exist within a nation's formal constitutional framework, it must command the consent, tacit or otherwise, of the citizens of that nation. If such institutions do not have the people's consent, then sooner or later, brutally or peacefully, they will decline and fall. From the former Soviet Union to South America, this is a basic dictum about rulers and the ruled. Even in Britain, the cradle of evolutionary systems, destruction of a State-owned organisation can ensue if it remains in the fabric of the constitution without the people's consent. (It happened in 1649 when the monarchy was violently overthrown).

The binding of the Church with the State, although destructive to the cause of liberty, was at least palatable to the people when the Church of England had real power over the law, education and welfare. When that power has waned to the extent that it barely exists, one of the original purposes for the link between Church and State has been stripped away. The only purpose which then remains for establishmentarians is to delude members of the Church about their power. A situation where public faith in the Church is gone, but where the Church acts in delusion of its power, would be very destructive to the Church.

This is not to suggest that the Church does currently act in such a way; but it is safer to cut the formal bonds with the Church's former power in order that such a destructive situation should never arise. There is little general public faith in the Church, and as an established body it must constantly tread warily. If disestablished, the Church would be freer to spread its message without generating public anger over its claim to speak for the nation. It would be far better for the Church to stand outside State structures, looking at them critically and working for its morality to prevail, than to be constantly in fear of the State imposing constraints upon its activities.

State control of the Church raises suspicions that the Church of England is just another Department of State. These suspicions are held not only by Marxists (who believe that religion is merely an opium for the masses), Anarchists (who believe that the State must be abolished), Machiavellians (who believe that the ruling class use whatever means possible to propagate myths amongst the ruled), liberals (who believe that the scope of the State should be limited); and some members of the Church itself (who want to have full control over their own affairs); but they are also held among more typically ordinary people, who simply feel that it is wrong for the leaders whom they elect to run an

organisation about which they do not care.

The Broken Concordat

Perhaps the only intellectually justifiable position for pro-establishmentarians is that adopted by Enoch Powell: he regards Anglicanism as an integral part of English nationalism, with roots going back to the Reformation which envisaged a permanently collaborative relationship between Church and State. But this approach requires an acceptance that Christianity has no direct implications for the conduct of political affairs, and that the Church should not pass comment upon the affairs of secular rulers.

In the modern day, however, too many of the Church's leaders find it impossible to accept that they should not be interfering in politics. Since the collaborative relationship no longer exists, even those who support the nationalist argument would have to accept that now, the Church and State should formally separate.

The concordat between Church and State has broken down. Sooner rather than later, the Church will have to ask for its freedom to maintain its integrity, or the State will have to rid itself of the burden of discrimination against many of its citizens on the grounds of their beliefs. It is unlikely that tensions will subside.

The established Church still has to accept State control of its legislation and senior appointments. This acceptance is obnoxious to many Christians within the Church, and holds little relevance for those outside it. Senior appointments to the Church of England are currently made by the Monarch, strictly following the advice of the Prime Minister. The Church's Crown Appointments Commission draws up a shortlist of two names for the Prime Minister. Although it is expected that the Prime Minister chooses the name at the top of the list, he is under no obligation to do so. Prime Ministers do not have to be Anglican communicants, yet they can decide who runs the Anglican Church. Effectively, the Prime Minister, a political figure, acts as Supreme Governor of the Anglican Church.

The most notable recent example of tension between Church and State on the issue of appointments took place in April 1987, when Bishop Santer (then of Kensington) was the second name on the list but still appointed as the new Bishop of Birmingham. It was rumoured that this was apparently on the grounds that he was not seen as quite as radically left-wing as the other candidate. Mrs Thatcher was perfectly within her rights to appoint him since she was following the 1977 Callaghan terms on Church appointments to the letter. She nevertheless succeeded in provoking the fury of many churchmen who resented the Prime Minister's duty to appoint whomsoever she viewed as the best candidate.

Allowing the secular leader to choose religious leaders undermines the credibility of religion. If part of the Church's purpose is to serve as a check on the State, then establishment of the Church of England fundamentally undermines that purpose. It is like

the Opposition acting as a check on the Government, but the Government decides who is to lead that Opposition.

Although there have been moves towards a democratic constitution for the Church of England, appointments of Church leaders by those who are not representative of the Church is anti-democratic.

Church legislation is passed by the three Houses of the General Synod (bishops, clergy and laity) and then must be passed by both Houses of Parliament before receiving Royal Assent. Bishops are represented twice in the process, since twenty-two of them are members of the House of Lords. In theory, even if the Bishops were the only Members of Parliament who were communicants of the Church of England, Parliament could still block or amend Church legislation. As it is, a small minority of MPs' constituents are practising Anglicans, especially in Wales and Scotland. Few Members of Parliament vote in Parliament on Church matters, for most know that they are incompetent on such subjects and recognise that they are unfit to pass judgement upon the wishes of the Church's General Synod. Those MPs who do trouble to vote may be far from representative from Church opinion.

Parliamentary control of Church legislation is not only ineffective but also unnecessary. It is redundant, and can cause delay to Church legislation or cause offence to the Church if the legislation were not allowed to pass. Parliamentary interference on the question of the ordination of remarried divorcees was a clear case of an arm of the State stealing the Church's right to decide for itself on theological questions. Parliament's Ecclesiastical Committee has interfered before and may well do so again.

The United Kingdom has an unwritten, evolutionary constitution, in which the useful parts are preserved and the less useful parts are dropped as society develops and progresses. Against a background of privatisation, reform of the Honours system and revolution in Whitehall, the establishment of the Church of England has outlived its purpose within the official framework of the constitution. Since the Church has shown that it is capable of ruling itself through the General Synod, the role of the State in its affairs is redundant. In the original words of Magna Carta, 'Let the English Church be free, have its rights entire and its liberties inviolate'.

Severing the Link

It is very unlikely that politicians will take the lead by initiating the break between Church and State. The only practical way for politicians to claim the authority to carry this out is to be elected on a manifesto pledge that disestablishment would be implemented. This would be on the grounds that the Church's establishment had a detrimental effect on the governance of the people.

It would be disingenuous to argue for disestablishment solely on the grounds that it would benefit the Church (even though it clearly would), for the State has no moral

authority to stand in judgement over the Church's affairs. The only situation where it would be advantageous for the State to initiate the break would be where disestablishment was forced on the Church because the Church had held firm on some point of principle judged to be central to its life. This would then certainly strengthen and unite the Church.

If the Church of England General Synod were to initiate the break with the State, a large majority would have to recognise that it is in the Church's interest to do so. Otherwise, the measure could be highly divisive, serving once again to weaken the Church of England. One advantage of the General Synod passing disestablishment legislation is that it could dictate the terms on which the Church would be disestablished. It may even decide that it should split itself into three distinct denominations representing its theological divisions.

The legislation would be of immense complexity since the body of law currently applicable to and peculiar to the Church of England is large and intricate. Parliament is unlikely to amend the general thrust of the legislation once it had been passed by the General Synod unless the terms of the split were financially too generous. In fact, most Members of Parliament would be only too happy to be relieved of their embarrassing and time-consuming duty to monitor the Church legislation and finances.

The Monarch

Disestablishment would free the Monarch from his or her responsibilities as Supreme Governor of the Church. This would have a number of beneficial side-effects for the Royal Family. Divorces in the Royal Family would become far less controversial, and abdication crises such as 1936 could be avoided. Heirs to the throne would be free to marry whom they liked without jeopardising their future tenure of the Throne. They would also be able to revert to the tradition of marrying members of foreign Royal Families, many of whom are Roman Catholics and therefore currently ineligible. The Monarch could choose to become guardian of the Church of England, except in a capacity separate from the position of the Crown in Parliament.

Before the Church was nationalised, monarchs were crowned by the Church because the Church was seen to represent the moral authority of the nation. If the Church could strengthen its moral appeal within the nation, then coronations would be more than simply ceremonial. The Church would be giving authority to the new monarch on behalf of the people. Governments and peoples would take more seriously a church which ran its affairs on its own, rather than having the monarch at its head and Parliament as the instrument for its accountability. Separation of Church and State may in fact go some way to restoring the balance of powers which in the past has been so conducive to the preservation and extension of liberty.

Parliament and the Law

Many ancient rules, structures and customs could be reformed after disestablishment. Some would be altered by the State; others by the Church itself. Above all, the Church would be free to pass its own legislation without Parliamentary interference and to make Canon law. In return, the statutory position of the church courts would be removed. Church courts would simply become internal disciplinary bodies.

Disestablishment should result in bishops no longer having an automatic right to sit in the House of Lords. This would remove duplication in the Church's legislative process. Some bishops might still be appointed to the Lords, for they are representatives of an important constituency of the nation. Many are distinguished scholars. The former Chief Rabbi Lord Jacobovits sits in the Lords on account of his distinction and valued judgement: some bishops would also have an important contribution to make to public debate, and Parliament would be an appropriate platform for them to express their views. Bishops would be appointed to the peerage by the Prime Minister, just as leading industrialists, academics, elder statesmen and other public figures are appointed.

Church of England clergymen are disqualified from sitting in the House of Commons by the House of Commons (Clergy Disqualification) Act 1801. This law was introduced because the livings of many clergy were in the gift of the Crown or nobility. No members of the clergy are any longer in the pay of the nobility. Disestablishment would sever any remaining financial links between the Crown and clergy. If this Act were repealed, those clerics of a political bent would be entitled to stand for election to the House of Commons like other private-sector churchmen. Disestablishment would also give clergy freedom to practise at the Bar.

There is no case for retaining Lords Spiritual as part of a distinct section of the House, sitting on their own benches, on the grounds that this separation is symbolic, for there is no national commitment to the faith of the Church of England to symbolise. Indeed, even Archbishop Carey has stated that bishops do not sit in the House of Lords to represent the Church of England. They are merely, in the Archbishop's own words, 'there as a result of the Church's place in our country's history and constitution.'

Parliament today is not the 'nation in council', behaving as the supreme and symbolic representative of the community in all its aspects. Although its function is to pass law, to scrutinise government and to debate issues of concern, it is not a body to which the nation looks for every variety of moral, political, social and spiritual leadership. Leadership in England today is exercised on many levels, not least through the family, voluntary organisations and businesses.

Financial Control

The Church of England has an endowment worth approximately £2.3 billion, managed by the Church Commissioners. The Commissioners were established in 1948 by the amalgamation of Queen Anne's Bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. They are responsible for the effective management of the greater part of the Church of England's historical assets, the income from which is predominantly used to pay, house and pension clergy. Responsibility for these tasks has been shared with the dioceses' money raised from contributions from Church members since the 1970s. The Commissioners also carry out administrative duties in connection with pastoral reorganisation and the future of redundant churches.

The Church Commissioners' funds are officially owned by the State and governed by secular law. They are effectively a public body like English Heritage or the Boundary Commission. The Commissioners are responsible to Parliament for their activities, and report on a regular basis through a Member of Parliament. But Parliament's scrutiny of the Commissioners' actions serves little purpose. Few MPs take an interest.

At the heart of the Commissioners' investment decision-making is the Assets Committee. Unlike a conventional finance committee, this body is granted 'exclusive power and duty to act in all matters relating to the management of the commissioners' assets'. The members consist of two priests and a maximum of eight lay members -- four appointed by the Prime Minister and four by the Church.

The Commissioners' assets form a 'closed fund' which can expect no further contributions from outside sources. Although it is commonly recognised as dangerous to borrow against the assets of such a fund, the Commissioners have recently been forced into doing so by a decision of the Government's National Audit Office, the unit that inspects the books of public bodies. Until the mid-1980s, the Commissioners lent money to wholly-owned subsidiaries which would then participate in developments. This money, which went out as capital, would return as income. The NAO said that this procedure violated the spirit of the Commissioners' deeds. But it did not object when the Commissioners started borrowing from the banks to finance their schemes. In this case, as in others, the subjection of Church funds to public finance rules may not have been altogether beneficial.

As public trustees, the Commissioners have a legal duty to seek the best returns they can for their investments. But if the Church were not part of the public sector, its endowment would not have to be managed as if it were a public fund. It could be looked after for what it really is: a private fund for the employees of the Church. The Bishop of Oxford has publicly attacked the ethics of the Church Commissioners' investment policy, claiming that they should be free to decline higher dividends from sources of which the Church does not approve even if this cuts their total income. Theologically he may well have a good argument, but while the Church remains established the Commissioner's funds will continue to be treated as public, rather than

Church, money.

But when being disestablished, the Church should not also be disendowed. Without the Commissioners' annual investment income of around £150 million or equivalent funding, the Church of England would shrivel to a husk. Weekly collections from congregations average £2 a head, much less than half what is required for the church to be self-supporting. Retention of the endowment would give the Church time to adapt itself to the real world of market forces, having been protected from them for five centuries. In any case, £2.3 billion is a small write-off for one of the largest constitutional changes this century, especially when the public does not currently see any return on those funds themselves anyway.

After disestablishment, the operations of the Church Commissioners could be restructured, to become more accountable to the clergy rather than to Parliament. Investment ethics could be decided in a democratic way within the Church, by vote of the General Synod. Clergy, whose very livelihood depends on the management of the endowment, would have more say in how their money is invested. Appointments to the Assets Committee would be made exclusively by the Church rather than partly by the Prime Minister. By giving away the endowment, the State would be providing one last 'sweetener', after which time it would never again have to guarantee the Church's finances. With the endowment under its control, the Church would be able to set about using it for purposes and in ways which it, rather than Parliament, considers important.

7. A Role for the Church

A Wider Mission

Even when formally disestablished, the Church could nonetheless retain an important role in public life. There are many functions which the Church could more usefully perform alongside other religious bodies as soon as its formal links with the State have been severed.

Some cooperation between the State, the Church of England and other faiths is already being achieved. Archbishop Carey's stated wish for the government 'to work in partnership with the Church in areas of common concern' has made some progress with the establishment of the Inner Cities Religious Council. The Council, chaired by the inner cities minister at the Department of the Environment, includes members of other Christian churches and other faiths, such as Muslims and Hindus.

After disestablishment, many in the Church of England will continue to see their organisation as the Church of the nation. The principle that the Church should aim to be responsible for the spiritual welfare of every soul in the country should remain. It sets an objective for the Church of England and provides it with a sense of mission. Many parish vicars will remain committed to discharging their responsibilities to every member of their parish, at the same time as recognising differing faiths.

The Church of England could have more success in looking after the spiritual welfare of the people if it had the opportunity to involve itself more visibly in the community. Most people generally find the churches remote. When they do come into contact with members of religious sects, they discover that there is little on offer unless they are already true believers. Being converted to the faith does, in fact, take time in most cases. By coming into contact with more members of the population more of the time, the churches could make progress in their evangelical mission.

Providing services other than spiritual welfare alone would enable religious bodies to come in contact with more people. The client base which most religions stress in their scriptures are those at the bottom of society who are suffering. It is strange, then, that in the Church of England at least, congregations tend to be composed of the affluent middle classes rather than poorer members of the community. Man cannot live by faith alone, and in attempting to attract more people to the faith, the Church could widen the scope of its functions.

Ministering to the Needy

Under establishment, the Church of England has lost out to the power of the State and others as a supplier of aid to the poor. Having met stiff competition from many organisations committed to collecting and spending large amounts of money for good causes, one of the Church's traditional roles has diminished. Until the King James Version of the Bible, many poor people viewed the Church as a welfare organisation. Certainly, few people could read the Latin scriptures.

Ever since the foundation of Westminster Abbey in 1050 as a monastic institution providing England's first infirmary, the Church has played a role in providing various forms of welfare support to people. Throughout mediaeval times, the Church was at the centre of community life. It not only led spiritually and morally, but it exerted a practical presence which included, *inter alia*, the provision of welfare services to members of the parishes.

The Church of England still had a very large market share in almsgiving by the eighteenth century, but it was the nineteenth century which saw an increasingly competitive welfare market in which the Church lost out. Before the 1836 Tithe Act, the revenues that the Church gathered from tithes were used for a dual function. Some was used for ecclesiastical purposes, such as the renovation of church buildings; some was used in the parish for community welfare and education purposes. From 1834, when responsibility for poor relief went to the Union of Parishes, the Church's influence over welfare provision began to diminish.

In Scotland, the Church retained responsibility for poor relief and many innovative welfare schemes were introduced -- by Thomas Chalmers, for example. But in England, the Church fell under the influence of the upper classes. Despite the philanthropic activities associated with the likes of Octavia Hill and Samuel Barnett, welfare provision by the Church went into general decline. Competition between religious organisations administering welfare intensified as nonconformism rose. Groups such as the Church Army and the Salvation Army took on the welfare role.

The State was also becoming involved in the plight of the poor. Some welfare functions had been first nationalised in 1595, but it is the growth of the State in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that has most undermined the Church's welfare role. Having lost its traditional client base, the Church's sway over all but a handful of people has now been lost. The demise of Church-provided welfare has been accompanied by a fall in the number of people attracted towards worship.

Disestablishment would present the Church of England with a real opportunity to reassert itself. It could do more to provide care for the poor and sick. Under the right conditions, the government would be only too willing to allow 'Good Samaritan' religious groups to take on some welfare responsibilities (just as it allows religious groups to run voluntary maintained schools).

Reinventing the Community

The 1990s have been viewed from all sides of the political spectrum as a decade in which the overriding objective is to improve people's 'quality of life'. Different forms of administrative government are emerging in response to the recognition that the vehicle of central government is not always satisfactory.

The moves towards greater devolution of public sector provision have resulted in greater efficiency of service delivery by professionals and bureaucracies. But whereas professionals and bureaucracies provide services, communities solve problems. Situations where people are in need of extra resources or help, which will always occur, are 'problem' situations that need solution. A structured service provided by bureaucrats or professionals often fails to address the 'problem' situations in which many people find themselves. Assistance at the most local level of the community is the means by which 'problem' situations can be best solved.

It is worth noting that the removal of welfare provision away from the competence of bureaucracies and towards the community is already underway. The launch of the 'Care in the Community' programme (whatever its specific strengths and weaknesses) is a recognition of the need to bring social service provision closer to the community and away from the direct 'service' that is provided by institutions and professionals. Community organisations tend to understand people's problems better than professional service delivery systems. Associations of community – the church, the family, the neighbourhood and the voluntary organisation – are more committed to their particular mission than any government agency could be, on account of their greater conviction and less rule-bound ways of working.

In the social services field, more and more contracting out of former government services is taking place. The Salvation Army. It still has today an annual voluntary income of £39 million, derived mostly from legacies. It also receives more than £20 million per year in government money, on a *pro rata* basis, for social service provision – such as hostel beds for the homeless and the 259 Project for young unemployed in Southwark, South London. The Salvation Army is already the nation's second largest provider of social services (after the government). As local authorities continue the trend of contracting out, so the Salvation Army is expanding its contribution in such mainstream council areas as day centres, children's homes and accommodation for the disabled. And further opportunities are arising for voluntary bodies to carry out social services functions as the care provision is devolved towards the community.

Charitable bodies play an important role in many other fields: such as health care (Imperial Cancer Research Fund and Cancer Research Campaign); emergency transport (Royal National Lifeboat Institution); and the environment (National Trust). The Church of England itself has set up the Church Urban Fund to carry out a range of activities in our inner cities. But there could also be an opportunity for charitable bodies, and the churches in particular, to take on more welfare functions on behalf of

the needy. If more churches and charities expressed a willingness to take on many of the welfare functions which currently remain in the preserve of the State, then politicians would be unlikely to stand in their way.

Allowing the private sector to play a greater role in welfare provision would result in more efficient and plentiful provision of welfare. The values of fellowship, cooperation and fraternity would be enhanced if some responsibility for welfare provision were removed from the hands of the organised professional interests of the State.

Tackling Community Problems

Since 1979, when politicians have sought to reduce the scope of the State, private charity has begun to show a revival. But there is still plenty of scope for reducing the State's near monopoly on the welfare marketplace. Because of the virtual State monopoly on the domestic welfare market, the Church has been driven to focus more and more of its attention on providing charity to worthy causes overseas. Yet it could be a much more powerful vehicle to help less fortunate individuals at home too. A revival in the Church's welfare activities would be a step towards reinventing that sense of community which people in the UK widely accept they have lost.

A start has already been made. With an annual income of £30 million, the Church Urban Fund seeks to provide support to those who feel abandoned in urban priority areas. Grants are given to support locally-run church-linked initiatives, ranging from training for new jobs to creating new homes and support for homeless people. The fund is growing, and the Church's commitment to it shows that there are people prepared to give their time to tackling community problems.

The Fund is by no means the ideal way of providing effective care to those in need in the community. Almost 10% of its income spent on providing for the bureaucracy that runs it. Central administration reduces the Fund's ability to forge links between local donors and beneficiaries. Projects are undertaken only after the centre has approved them. This reduces local initiative and threatens more innovative ideas and schemes.

The function of providing care and advice is not simple, patterned and repetitive: it is an art. To take advantage of the unanticipated, parishes and dioceses choosing to run welfare services should be able to operate under more flexible rules and budgets. It is far more effective to run services by organising at the level of the 'small platoons' so favoured by Edmund Burke -- with local budgeting, and local management.

As well as being administered in a centralist, bureaucratic fashion, the Church Urban Fund falls under the spell of the collectivist assumption that today's social problems result directly from capitalism: that economic individualism has bred an unjust society, that greater independence has bred greater selfishness, and that only a full-scale redistribution of wealth and income can solve our social problems.

The reality is that our most difficult the social problems stem from the lack of any coherent moral foundation underpinning the State welfare system, and the growing drift into dependency which has grown up as a result. The Church itself discovered in the last century that if you gave alms to people as of right, they were more likely to live for the charity and less likely to take meaningful control of their own lives. Welfare programmes, whether undertaken by the Church or by other bodies, should aim to rehabilitate people within the community, to build upon their abilities and develop their self-respect and independence -- not to trap them into a hopeless dependency through mere financial patronage.

It should be no surprise that we now see such growth in the symptoms of that despair and lack of self-respect: drug abuse, casual violence, petty crime, homelessness, work avoidance and contempt for conventional values. The Church needs to give a moral lead if it is to help tackle such problems. Religious bodies should concentrate above all on stimulating a new spirit of community. For where people, however poor, have a sense of community, they are not an underclass. When social standards and values lose their point, the decline can spread insidiously throughout society, engulfing the poorest first.

Welfare functions undertaken by religious organisations should be geared towards promoting a sense of personal responsibility and self-reliance. Only with a high priority attached to these values can a society be cohesive. Instead of merely criticising every part of the State welfare system as inadequate, the Church might be far better employed in helping politicians to design a new mechanism which protected those in genuine need while simultaneously encouraging people to take responsibility for their own lives. This problem needs not just political and economic skills, but moral vision too.

A Range of Functions

There are many good-spirited people from the churches and elsewhere who wish to work locally for a more cohesive community. The Church could draw more deeply on volunteers to provide help to people in need. Functions might include education on managing a household budget cost-effectively, homelessness advice, help with job seeking and careers information. They might bulk-purchase items so that those on benefit could obtain essential household goods conveniently and cheaply. They could build close relationships with the corporate sector, to provide training, seed money and technical assistance.

Counselling and training are clearly areas where the voluntary sector can play an enhanced role. The alleviation of homelessness is another strategy through which voluntary organisations could help to give back self-respect to members of the underclass. They could offer services such as negotiating with local authorities or insurance companies on their behalf. They may take on some of the functions of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, and advise on marriage guidance and drug and alcohol abuse. In every parish across the country there are people willing to give their time and effort into helping

those less fortunate than themselves. They will not be spurred into action without the right leadership.

The lead should come from the Church itself, but the government could also help. New measures could be introduced to help churches and voluntary bodies raise funds more easily. Or again, welfare organisations could act as budget-holders for government welfare funds, identifying local needs and marshalling local services to protect the needy and to head off future problems.

Other welfare organisations, both voluntary and private, could actually deliver welfare services under contract to the Department of Social Security. Instead of funds being administered by the Department and delivered directly to individuals, support could go instead to the welfare organisations, whose volunteers provide care services, and who can provide support and administrative support to individual carers.

In Germany, both the Catholic and Protestant churches receive funds through the voluntary payment of a church tax, or "Kirchensteuer". It may not be coincidental that the German churches have an authority and following unknown to the Church in England. There are more effective ways of fund raising than casually relying on the faithful to come to church bearing covenant envelopes and change for the offertory box.

The Church could reform its own structures. The clergy should be given financial incentives for its staff to meet performance targets. The Church has a sales force of 10,000 vicars established on prime sites throughout the country who could be motivated to benefit themselves by working to benefit others. Innovative ideas to raise money, such as the commercial letting of Church land and buildings, could be put into practice. The Church could become the focal point of help in the local community.

Some collectivists may see the withdrawal, partial or otherwise, of the government from the field of welfare as tantamount to the privatisation of welfare. What many would not accept is that privatising or voluntarising some welfare functions would result in more efficient and plentiful provision of welfare. Indeed, it is likely that the values of fellowship, cooperation and fraternity would be enhanced if some responsibility for welfare provision was removed from the hands of the organised professional interests of the State.

The Church of England could adopt a far larger role in establishing a framework for the relief of social ills when it has been taken out of the ownership of the State. With control over its own structures, the Church could direct its efforts towards helping those about whom it currently talks much but ministers little. A stronger welfare role within the community would enable it to assume a higher profile and take a moral lead.

Working uninhibitedly for people in the community would demonstrate the Church's commitment towards the care of that community and the values which bind it. The result may well be a rise in congregational numbers and committed Christians. The welfare function is one to which the Church is ideally suited. With the right leadership,

the right constitutional freedoms, and the right incentives, people may have the opportunity to feel renewed faith in the English Church.

8. Conclusion

This report has not sought to dwell on the critical in which the Church of England currently finds itself, after more than a year of fierce theological debate over female ordination which has exposed real divisions in Church ranks.

The medium-term and long-term outcome of this argument is of course of enormous significance for how the Church moves forward, and indeed even in terms of the future size and authority of the Church itself.

Certainly, some members of the Church of England have already transferred their allegiance to other brands of Christianity, Roman Catholicism in particular. Some priests have effectively performed management buy-outs of their own parishes, taking assets and congregations with them.

But it is less clear that schism on a much larger scale will yet develop. And the ordination debate overshadowed other major obstacles which will continue to confront the Church, no matter how the matter is finally settled and on what scale the exodus proceeds. Accordingly, it is these other obstacles that this report highlights.

If the Church is to succeed in expanding its market share, both in terms of the numbers attending church services and its wider role as a spiritual and physical welfare provider in the community, it needs more than a proclaimed decade of evangelism. It needs structural overhaul.

Disestablishment and the ability to choose its own future are only the first steps. Also vital to recovery are the development of coherent product lines, reducing bureaucracy, installing a flatter management structure, new forms of performance-related pay, clearer operating objectives, more confident market positioning, and better financial control. A successful marketing strategy will take full advantage of the Church's existing goodwill and supply structures, its access to a workforce of volunteers, and its shareholder base of active churchgoers who can be drawn on much more deeply in the support of new initiatives.

The Church of England can learn to compete, or it can retreat within its existing shell of State protection and patronage. But in so doing it will surely stagnate and shrink like all supposed beneficiaries of protectionism. Far better to expose the Church now to the realities -- and the opportunities -- of the marketplace and so force it to be a major player in the community.

The Church is ideally suited to this community role. Its customers, in terms of both the general public and the ruling politicians, desperately want its moral force on their side, on the side of strong communities and community values. In broadening its role in this way, the Church will find itself in a virtuous spiral, attracting more resources because it has more weight. But to do so, it must first face that opportunity with confidence and decide resolutely to grasp it.

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