

Disestablish the Church

Disestablishment of the Church of England, meaning its formal separation from the state, is one of our primary objectives, and has been since our founding in 1866. There have been many proponents, religious and non-religious, or church-state separation, and there are a wide variety of motivations for supporting this reform.

Disestablishing the Church would mean ending the privileged position of the Church of England. It would also end the monarch's *ex-officio* role as Head of the Church.

The result of this would be that the Church would no longer have privileged input into government but also that government could not involve itself in the running of the Church; both sides would gain autonomy.

What's the problem?

There are two official two state-recognised Christian denominations – the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. There is no established church in Northern Ireland or Wales but the 26 unelected bishops of the Church of England who sit in the House of Lords influence laws that affect the whole of the UK.

Establishment is an anachronism. The existence of a legally-enshrined, national religion and established church privileges one part of the population, one institution and one set of beliefs.

A national religion which retains archaic and unjust privileges is iniquitous to the rest of the population – the majority of which do not attend services of the Church of England. Even if a massive majority of people did share one religious view, that would still be no reason to impose that belief on the rest of society.

The Church of England has enjoyed significant privileges relating to "establishment" for many centuries. These religious privileges have remained largely unchanged despite the massive and continuing reduction in support for the Church in the UK. This decline can be measured in terms of membership, attendance and – in the wider context of what the Church describes as its "mission to the nation" – belief in God or Christianity. The serious decline started around three quarters of a century ago and has become more precipitous in recent decades. Realistically, this trend is irreversible for the foreseeable future, making the case for the Church of England's establishment unsustainable. The potential major split in the Church of England over sexuality issues only makes the case for disestablishment stronger.

It is inappropriate to have any 'national religion', and we believe a separation of church and state would be best for both.

There have been many proponents, religious and non-religious, for church-state separation, and there are a wide variety of motivations for supporting this reform. Removing all symbolic and institutional ties between government and religion is the only way to ensure equal treatment to citizens of all religions and none.

Disestablishment is right in principle and would be more representative of the changing landscape of religion and belief in the UK.

What are we doing?

- Creating constitutional change is a significant task. Our approach is to identify strategic opportunities to weaken links between church and state, an example of which was our legal action over prayers in council meetings. We also seek to highlight the negative aspects of an established church both to shape public opinion and to maintain the pressure on Britain's elected representatives. We take every possible opportunity to emphasise the fact that a secular state offers the best means of ensuring freedom, tolerance and equality for all citizens, religious and non-religious alike.
- In December 2017 we [published a report](#) outlining the current state of establishment, the arguments for disestablishment and the challenges involved in making this a reality.

What you can do:

Take action

Please consider supporting our petition to disestablish the Church of England and writing to your MP calling on them to support the separation of church and state.

- [Petition](#)
- [Letter to MP](#)

[Church and state should be separate. That's why I support #disestablishment](#)
[Click to tweet](#)

More information

- [Separating Church and State: The Case for Disestablishment](#)
Our 2017 report outlines the central arguments for a separation of church and state and considers the challenges involved in making this a reality. It argues that disestablishment is right both as a basic matter of principle and in order to make the UK more representative of the changing landscape of religion and belief.
- [Scrap the Bishops' Bench](#)
For the sake of fairness we do not believe any seats in our legislature should be reserved for religious leaders by right. And existing privileges shouldn't be expanded to other faiths, that isn't the answer.

While you're here

Please consider a donation to enable us campaign for the separation of religion and government.

Together we can make a fairer more secular state.

- [Support us from just £1 a month](#)