

Welby says separation of church and state “would not be a disaster”, admits establishment has been abused

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The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that while he is opposed to the disestablishment of the Church of England, the separation of church and state would not be a disaster for the Anglican Church.

Speaking to members of the judiciary, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby [said](#) that separating church and state by disestablishing the Church of England "would not be a disaster or a great advantage" to the Church.

While the Archbishop was very clear that he would oppose the separation of church and state, he said that such a development would "just be another event in a very long history".

Archbishop Welby claimed that "I think we have learned in the last half-century that establishment is good for the country, a way of serving the country through the parish system."

But he added that if "if we're going to abuse establishment as we have done in the past, then absolutely [the Church should be disestablished]".

NSS campaigns manager Stephen Evans commented: "While the Archbishop clearly doesn't support disestablishment, there are many other [religious advocates](#) of separating church and state for the benefit of both. The Church should be able to make its pitch and proselytise in the public square without retaining anachronistic privileges."

The Archbishop also said that the UK "is not a Christian country in the sense that we are all churchgoing, but actually it never was."

"The height of churchgoing in England was in the 1850s, when about 22% of the population would regularly go to church."

Recent projections from the Church of England found that just 18 in 1000 people attend Anglican services regularly, and that this number is [expected to drop](#) to around 10 per 1000 population over the next thirty years.

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