

Welby: disestablishment “a decision for parliament and people”

Posted: Fri, 18th May 2018

The National Secular Society has reiterated its call for the separation of church and state after the archbishop of Canterbury suggested he would not stand in its way.

In an interview with [The Guardian](#), Justin Welby said disestablishing the Church of England would not be a "disaster" and the removal of its privileges should be "a decision for parliament and people".

"Would it be a disaster?" Welby said. "No. Nothing is a disaster with God." He added that disestablishment would be "a complicated process".

He also said local church communities acting at the grassroots level are more important than the national institution.

In response NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "Welby is right to say the removal of C of E's privileges is decision for parliament and people.

"It is a decision the people of Britain should make to create a fairer, more egalitarian society. Religion of course has a place in our society for those who want it, but on terms of equality, not privilege."

The NSS has been making the case for disestablishment since its [founding](#) in 1866.

[Only 22% of countries](#) have an official state religion. The UK is one of only two countries in the world that [reserve seats](#) in their legislature for clerics, the other being Iran.

In December the NSS highlighted the benefits of disestablishment for both the church and the state in its report [Separating Church and State: The Case for Disestablishment](#). The report called the arguments for disestablishment "compelling".

"Establishment, by definition, grants undue privileges to one particular religion, to one particular section of the population and to one particular institution."

It said the long-term prospects of separation between church and state were "positive". It added that "potential flashpoints", which would open opportunities for disestablishment, would emerge with "considerable frequency". It cited the "significant values gap between the hierarchy of the church and mainstream British public opinion".

In particular it highlighted the church's "regressive stance" on issues such as the ordination of female bishops, same-sex marriage and the decriminalisation of assisted suicide.

Welby's interview was conducted shortly before the royal wedding between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, which he will preside over. His comments echo those made by his predecessor Rowan Williams [last year](#) that disestablishment would be "by no means the end of the world".

Welby also said he is "conscious of the possibility" that the Church of England's reputation could be damaged further by the revelations arising from the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse](#).

While you're here

Our news and opinion content is an important part of our campaigns work. Many articles involve a lot of research by our campaigns team. If you value this output, please consider supporting us today.

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

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Disestablishment](#)

Related Campaigns

-

[**Disestablish the Church of England**](#)

A state religion has no place in a 21st century democracy.

[Read More](#)

Related Articles

[**NSS announces major conference on protecting liberal values**](#)

Kenan Malik, Joan Smith and more speaking at NSS Secularism 2024 conference in London. [Read More »](#)

[**New extremism definition may put free speech at risk, NSS warns**](#)

Proposed definition could 'label secularists as extremists'. [Read More »](#)

A state Church is no bulwark against extremism – but secularism is

With its commitment to the separation of religion and state and safeguarding the rights of all individuals, secularism can provide an effective defence against the spread of extremism, says Stephen Evans. [Read More »](#)

Report: CofE safeguarding “below standards” of secular institutions

Most victims and survivors unsatisfied with safeguarding approaches, while safeguarding 'weaponised' to remove those "seen as a nuisance", report finds. [Read More »](#)

Resist calls for £50m a year for churches, NSS urges minister

Churches trust also calls for churches to host NHS services. [Read More »](#)