

The Church of England turns its fire on England

It used to be said unhelpfully that the Anglican Church was the Conservative party at prayer. As a once well attended national Church it needed to be and was more inclusive than that. It was true that in the last century many Conservative MPs, Councillors and voluntary workers swelled congregations alongside people of other parties and the non political. Today more Conservatives stay away, knowing they are not welcome. The Church which failed to oppose Labour's policy of creating a hostile atmosphere for illegal migrants switched to opposing the same policy from Mrs May, a keen Churchgoer herself. Today the Church of England seems to favour Extinction Rebellion and the crusade against CO2 ,the resurrection of U.K. membership of the EU and proportional representation. Its national leaders encourage a hostile atmosphere for Conservatives and the English majority.

Last summer the Archbishop of York lectured England that it needed to be broken up into governing regions on the EU model. He had failed to notice the referendum vote against an elected government of the North East, or the hostility of many English Leave voters to the way the EU insisted on trying to break up our country by denying England any place on the map or in the constitution of their Europe. I asked him to debate the matter with me as a fellow Parliamentarian. He could not even be bothered to send me a personal reply to decline the opportunity.

The Archbishops should remember the history of the Anglican Church. The Church tolerated different views of the once explosive issue of transubstantiation. It left most sensitive items of belief to individual judgement and inner conviction. The Church did a good job opening up the Christian message to the masses with the bible in English and the great language of the James Bible and the Elizabethan Common Prayer book. The Reformation which created the Anglican Church was based on a rejection of the courts and government from Rome. The dissolution of the monasteries was a welcome social and economic revolution connecting more priests with local communities.

It is possible to be more critical of the failure to follow the surge of urban populations in the nineteenth century when the break away Methodists and other non conformists served congregations and added greatly to hymn books in the absence of interest from the mother Church. More recently I see bishops using their privileged positions in the Lords to back European and regional causes voted down by a majority of voters.

If the Archbishops ever want to win back lost congregations they could try being more positive about the country they serve.

I do not want the Church to preach Conservatism from the pulpits nor to agree with all a government does. I just ask that national unelected Church leaders with seats in the Lords show some sympathy with majority views and some understanding of why their congregations have shrunk so much.