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# **Has the Church of England lost the English people? Some quantitative tests**

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# Overview

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- Attachment indicators
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# About That Was the Church that Was

- Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead, That Was the Church that Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People, London: Bloomsbury, July 2016
- Lively and mainly damning account of developments in Church of England between 1986 and 2016, receiving mixed reviews
- Authors' central thesis that Church became progressively more inward-looking, obsessed with 'managerial voodoo', evolving from a societal into a congregational church, with wide 'values gap' opening up between itself and nation
- Claim that Church of England 'lost the English people' during these three decades lends itself to quantitative scrutiny

# Attachment indicators (1)

## PROFESSION

- Anglican market share has declined continuously since at least c. 1680, when it was 94%, and is now just 18% (14% less than raised as Anglicans)
- Ground was first lost to Dissent but latterly to non-denominational Christianity and no religion

## MEMBERSHIP

- Electoral Roll peaked at 15% of adults in late 1920s, now 2%
- Easter Day Communicants 9% of adults in 1922, now 2%
- Data on % baptised and confirmed only briefly calculated

# Attachment indicators (2)

## CHURCHGOING

- Compulsory after Reformation but enforcement variable and system collapsed after 1689 (if not finally repealed until 1969)
- Anglican Usual Sunday Attendance 3.5% population in 1968, now 1.4% (2.3% at Easter, 4.6% at Christmas)

## RITES OF PASSAGE

- Anglican baptisms/live births 71% in 1920s, now 11%
- Anglican share of marriages 92% in early 1840s, now 21%
- Anglican funerals/deaths 46% in 2000, now 30%

# Attitudinal indicators (1)

- Sourced from opinion polls and relate to Great Britain

## ORDINATION OF WOMEN

- Britons and professing Anglicans strongly in favour of women priests and bishops and certainly ahead of Church policy

## SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

- Less clear-cut evidence of values gap between Church and nation (and professing Anglicans) until very recent years

## OTHER ISSUES

- Significant values gap between Church and nation on remarriage of divorcees in church and assisted dying (not covered by Brown/Woodhead)

# Attitudinal indicators (2)

## ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY

- Limited public knowledge of incumbents, with diminishing ratings of Robert Runcie and Rowan Williams (but not George Carey)

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND

- Weakening public regard for Church and its societal value and relevance
- Relatively little public appetite for disestablishment, with presence of bishops in House of Lords most contentious issue

# Conclusions

- That Was the Church that Was somewhat overstated
- Attachment indicators show decline of Church has been long-term, with most measures already at a low ebb in 1986, and insufficient regard paid by Brown/Woodhead to broader secularization
- Attitudinal indicators show division between Church and nation is not always clear-cut, with Brown/Woodhead focusing too much on debates about same-sex marriage
- Umbilical cord attaching Church and nation not severed just yet, but there is progressive distance between the two

# Further information

## READING

- Clive D. Field, 'Has the Church of England lost the English people? Some quantitative tests', Theology, Vol. 120, No. 2, March-April 2017, pp. 83-92
- Clive D. Field, 'Another window on British secularization: public attitudes to Church and clergy since the 1960s', Contemporary British History, Vol. 28, No. 2, June 2014, pp. 190-218

## CONTACT

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