

Theology essay: british parish life essay



Models of British parish life: Offer a systematic and critical analysis of the usage of theoretical accounts of parish life and how these may or may not advance the on-going pastoral reclamation of parishes.

‘ So of class regenerating our Church will intend regenerating our parishes.

But so much of that reclamation — religious, liturgical, pastoral —

will come from the communities organizing and meeting in our

parishes our parishes should see themselves as a primary focal point

for reclamation. ‘

(Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor, 2005)

Of late British parishes have been in terrible crisis: applications for priesthood have dwindled, folds have in some topographic points halved, churches have been closed and their land sold, and others forced to unify with their neighbors. Many of the Church ‘ s critics have implied that this diminution is irreversible. Cardinal O’Connor ‘ s words suggest something different. They suggest that a cardinal reclamation and restructuring of British parishes can reinvigorate pastoral and religious life of the Church and that of the parishes themselves.

This essay examines several possible future theoretical accounts of British parish life and evaluates each of them to mensurate their fittingness to convey about this parish reclamation. After measuring each of these theoretical accounts, the essay looks at two specific illustrations of the

execution of these theoretical accounts to British parish life. To get down though, allow us briefly see the fortunes that make the debut these theoretical accounts of reclamation necessary ; what is it that needs to be renewed?

For centuries *the parish* was the focal point of British Church life ; parishes were full with folds and campaigners for priesthood ; they knew pastoral success, religious verve and fiscal security. A parish was typically ministered to by a pastor who was supported by fellow clergy and a secretary and bookkeeper. Laity had an of import, but discreet and limited function in the leading and organisation of the parish (Horns by-Smith, 1999) . The past 30 old ages have witnessed a profound prostration in the lucks of the parishes of Europe and Britain in peculiar. This diminution is normally assigned to the growing ofsecularization and increasing hesitance and uncertainty about the Church ' s and its parishes ' ability to execute their religious and pastoral undertakings.

This crisis has become so intense that throughout the United Kingdom bishoprics and parishes have been forced to contemplate extremist restructuring and re-organization of centuries old traditions. Certain ' models of parish life ' have been proposed by theologians and parishioners as ways to regenerate the pastoral life of these parishes (Sweeter, 1993) . These theoretical accounts normally have the undermentioned characteristics. They involve the merger of several parishes into a larger individual parish ; they depend far more upon the aid and engagement of temporalty ; they seek to integrate broader religion communities into their constructions. Soon

this essay examines five such theoretical accounts. The first is that of the 'cluster' parish.

(1) The ' Cluster ' theoretical account of parish is fleetly replacing the traditional parish theoretical account and setting itself as the dominant alternate type of parish. Harmonizing to this theoretical account, two or more parishes are fused together and tended to by a individual curate, or pastoral squad. Each parish however keeps its peculiarity and independency as required by both church and province jurisprudence. Each parish retains the right to hold its own plan of ministry and its own staffing hierarchy and construction (though in pattern nevertheless ' clustered ' parishes by and large adopt a centralised disposal and ministry) .

Harmonizing to diocesan instructions, clustered parishes can keep a joint idyll assembly which is attended by members of each single parish.

Individual parishes must maintain their own fiscal assembly, although the assorted fiscal councils of different parishes may convene together at any clip to discourse corporate policies or proposals. The intent of clustered parishes is to advance corporate community activity. Therefore parishes in a bunch are described as ' yoked ' : they are separate entities, but joined in a common intent and way. The distinguishable advantage of such parish theoretical accounts is that they facilitate the sharing of ' pooled resources ' (fiscal, staffing, congregational etc. ,) .

These corporate activities are intended to bring forth ' *bunch programs* ' whereby several parishes devise a design for the short-run and medium-term hereafter of these several parishes. In Bedford shire for case: the parishes of

Shillington, Barton and Shefford came together to engage a ballad curate to organize societal services, an educational adviser for nine local schools, and a manager of ballad preparation. This is an case of a high degree of 'clustering' activity ; it is argued that if other parishes were to follow such strategies so the modern-day force per unit areas of finance, staff and fold deficits would be much improved.

British parishes might learn from the illustration of the United States where bunch parishes have proved really successful. For case, in the bishopric of Rochester Bishop Clark 's strategy ' *Pastoral Planning in the New Millennium* ' (Bishop Clark) has been administered successfully to several parishes. ' Clusters ' are besides seen asa critical manner of rejuvenating and reviewing the leading construction of parishes. The ' *Notre Dame Study of Parish Life* ' (Notre Dame) affirmed the dominance of laic staff within the parish construction. The accretion of assorted professional experiences brought together by bunchs allows for a broader preparation and expertness for ballad curates. For case, temporalty can be trained to curate Sunday Communion Services subtraction in the absence of a priest. Parishes can besides use laic staff — including adult females — to work in parish ministries as ' pastoral helpers ' (Hoge, 1998) .

(2) *Single Parishes* are the traditional and ideal signifier of the British parish. Despite the crises impacting British parishes and the increasing inclination of bishoprics to constellate their parishes, there are still individual parishes being created in the United Kingdom. A individual parish is established to run into the demand of a turning an spread outing Catholic or Anglican population in a peculiar country. The tremendous demographic

displacements of recent decennaries have meant that big Numberss of people have flocked to antecedently sparsely populated countries, and, vice-versa, big groups have moved from to a great extent populated countries go forthing them sparsely populated (Harrington, 1997) .

Faced with these mass motions parishes have frequently had to switch and change their boundaries to suit the motions of their parishioners. Some individual parishes have been closed ; others have been reconstituted or invented to get by with the demographics of their folds. As such, some individual parishes take over the countries of other parishes that have now been closed. Increasingly this imbrication is go oning where many parishes are next to one another. Many parishes that are shutting were originally established to curate to different nationalities (an Italian or Polish immigrant community for illustration) in to a great extent populated parts of metropoliss. The intent of a individual parish is to beef up a religion community, raise fundss for edifice undertakings and development plans, and make a system of pastoral attention for its parishioners.

(3) The *Single Parish With Multiple Worship and Ministry Sites* is a new type of theoretical account that involves the complete brotherhood of two or more separate parishes into a individual parish. The person installations - church, lands, other edifices — of each parish are retained and used by parishioners, but there is now a individual Paris manus one religion group. The freshly created parish is given a new name, takes a new curate and pastoral disposal and ministry leading. Frequently one church from these amalgamated parishes will be transformed into a site for ministry instruction or sold to another community organisation.

(4) In the *Single Parish with Multiple Faith Communities* theoretical account a individual parish assumes duty and attention for several faith communities - infirmaries, schools, prisons and so on. If a school, for case, is in the locality of a peculiar parish, so the vicar or chaplain for that school is placed on the pastoral leading panel of that parish. In this theoretical account the parish assumes direct pastoral duty for the school. This coming together of different faith communities is intended to reinvigorate the pastoral work and religious verve of the parish and to advance greater coordination within different faith communities. The leading of the parish is made more multi-cultural and can pull upon a more diverse panel of expertness to oversee its pastoral attention.

(5) A similar theoretical account is that of *Multiple Parishes with Multiple Faith Communities*. In this theoretical account several independent parishes foster a partnership to provide pastoral aid to the assorted faith communities within their gathered parishes. In add-on to faith communities such as infirmaries and schools, these strategies give pastoral attention to particular faith communities like the physically or mentally handicapped, immigrants, victims of domestic force and so on. In these cases the joint parish partnership portions the fiscal cost with the religion community that it helps. In such cases, the ministry of the parish may be based in a individual parish or be a corporate representation of each of the several parishes. In Luton, for case, several parishes work together to supply assistance for the local Pakistani and Indian immigrant communities.

In add-on to these new theoretical accounts of parish life, many parishes are sing alternate theoretical accounts of leading and ministry. This essay briefly

<https://assignbuster.com/theology-essay-british-parish-life-essay/>

examines three of these now. *Joint Plans* are ministry plans run as a partnership plan between several parishes, instead than as separate plans as has been done traditionally. These plans besides tend to be centered in a individual site to better efficiency. This strategy has been piloted in America in the Monroe County ' s Catholic Schools with the partnership board of the Monroe Country Parishes (Monroe) - and this theoretical account may turn out a successful debut here in Britain. (2) *Joint Staff* plans allow several parishes to engage one member of staff who runs curate plans throughout these several parishes. This is a peculiarly imaginative manner to utilize the larger Numberss of temporalty who are going involved in parish life. (3) *Independent Single Parish Programs* are the traditional theoretical account of parish ministry and some individual parishes are still affluent plenty to wholly finance their ain ministry plans. Numbers of such independent plans nevertheless are decreasing in favor of either of the two types of plan described above.

These assorted theoretical accounts require a significant restructuring of the traditional staffing theoretical account of a parish. Less than fifty old ages ago a normal parish was staffed by a curate and possibly several adjunct curates every bit good as a parish secretary and a parish comptroller (Hoge, 1998) . This parish construction was about uniformly distributed throughout Great Britain. Now nevertheless parishes are get downing to demo greater diverseness: their staff is composed of a higher per centum of lasting deacons, priest curates and laypersons. This diverseness of staff allows single parishes to take their staff harmonizing to the peculiar demands of that parish and the parish theoretical account it has chosen to follow. Certain

parishes for case may use retired priests or adult females to carry on nuptials or baptism ceremonials.

Priest decision makers are charged by bishops to move as decision makers for parishes ; they are basically more efficient replacings for the traditional but now expensive type of parish bookkeeper. *Permanent Deacons* have been employed in diocese as far back as 1982. Permanent Deacons have several maps in a parish ; they work at baptisms, funerals, aftermaths and so on. Deacon scan informant matrimonies, aid at the Mass, and introduce supplications. Deacons have far making pastoral duties: they are to a great extent involved in charity work and with attention in the justness system. Worsening Numberss of priests mean that parishes are progressively turning to lasting deacons for pastoral work and for assisting dog-tired curates. Permanent deacons are progressively working as curates besides.

Pastoral Administrators are delegated in conformity with Canon 517. 2 to carry on pastoral work within a parish without really being priests. Pastoral decision makers do the work of curates except they are non allowed to preside over sacraments intended merely for appointed priests. Womans with makings and laic people can be appointed as pastoral decision makers. If a parish has a pastoral decision maker so in add-on a s *acramental curate* will be appointed to execute sacraments such as the Eucharist. *Catechetical Leaderships* supply strategies of spiritual instruction for all members of a parish. They promote plans for assorted types of spiritual instruction: instruction for school kids, direction for sacraments, instruction for parents and neophytes ate for kids expecting Confirmation. *Business Directors* are

progressively necessary in modern parishes to form the fundss of a parish, their programs for edifice, staff costs, legal affairs, histories and so on.

Let us now turn to look at the effectivity of the ' cluster ' theoretical account for the reclamation two modern British parishes. Cardinal Murphy O'Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, argues that ' cluster ' type parishes will be the hereafter of parishes within his ain bishopric of Westminster. The Cardinal ' s long-anticipated green paper ' Response and Analysis ' , delivered as a address in Westminster Cathedral, declares that extremist restructuring of Westminster parishes is required to guarantee their reclamation. To cite *The Times* on the twenty-four hours of the Cardinal ' s address: ' Although merely *one bishopric among 22 in England and Wales, the pioneering programs of Westminster, this state ' s " mother " bishopric, to radically alter the manner it operates to get by with the quickly worsening Numberss are being watched closely by church governments throughout the West. '*

That such a senior figure in the Catholic Church could do such a address was interpreted throughout Europe to connote the earnestness of the demand to reform parish constructions. The Cardinal informed his parishioners that many parishes would confront closing or amalgamation, and parishioners were told that they can no longer anticipate a lasting priest in their parish and must accommodate to this hard alteration. The Cardinal besides encouraged laypersons to be far more involved in disposal, pastoral work and supplications of parishes. He proposed that Masses be held less frequently than soon, and that parishes will be forced to organize staff, ministries, supplication and possibly Holy Eucharists.

The Cardinal explained that these constellating steps were a response to the radically dwindling Numberss of priests and folds in recent old ages. In 1990 843priests were working in Westminster ' s parishes ; the figure was 623 in 2005 and is estimated to drop to 471 by 2015 - a 50 % autumn in a one-fourth of a decennary. Westminster is implementing the bunch theoretical account to look into these worrying Numberss. Cardinal Murphy feels confidant the new steps will be successful, stating ' *There is no ground to lose assurance in the Lord of the crop who desires to direct laborers His crop* ' (Murphy-O'Connor, 2005) .

The Cardinal quoted the 500, 000 Roman Catholics that have joined the parishes of Westminster and besides the record figure (780) of people who were using to come in the Church via its grownup baptism plan. Thus the Cardinal claimed that the reorganisation of parishes is a necessary compensation for the changing construction and demographics of the Church. His green paper said that there would be a ' profound ' alteration in the image and construction of the church over the following 15 old ages. Parishes will besides necessitate to follow a ' new head set ' to work the chances of laic leading. Basically: ' *The Church in Westminster will necessitate to travel off from the thought that the viability of a parish is contingent upon its occupant priest* ' (Murphy-O'Connor, 2005) .

The Cardinal ' s message ramifies throughout the parishes of the United Kingdom: he says that every parish must now believe really hard about whether they will shut, merge, be assimilated by a larger parish or be ' clustered ' with other parishes ' . The Cardinal warned of the effects of non minding these alterations: ' *In some ways the Church and parishes in Europe*

and peculiarly in Great Britain is at such a clip now. It is a clip of deceasing and lifting. It is a clip of crisis . ' The Cardinal defined ' crisis ' as ' *a clip of determinations* ' and capriciousness ; but one in which chance was present. Speaking of the demand for reclamation he said ' *We should non be surprised at the challenges and the jitteriness and the frights that face us here in our ain state* ' (Murphy-O'Connor, 2005) . It can so be said that the parishes of Westminster are tentatively optimistic about the debut of ' cluster ' theoretical accounts.

In the bishopric of Salford proposals for new theoretical accounts of parish life have been less welcome (Harrington, 1997) . The Diocese of Salford covers the state of Lancashire and the parishes of the towns of Manchester, Bolton, Rochdale, Blackburn, Oldham, and Bury. The Bishop of the diocese, Bishop Terence Brain, late sought to use bunch theoretical accounts to decide the crisis of Numberss of priesthood applicer sand fold attending. The figure of priests in Salford is predicted to fall from 216 today to 113 in 2018. Bishop Brain warned his parishioners that ' *Redundant edifices will, on the whole, be demolished and the sites disposed of* ' (Harrington, 1997) . Fifteen churches are proposed to be shut, and 17s have been shut since the 1960 ' s.

Harmonizing to one parishioner the Bishop ' s proposals read like ' *the concern program of a president compelled to set up the ' downsizing ' of a house ' s mill* ' (Harrington, 1997) . Outrage continued when parish churches were demolished whilst the diocese went in front with a planned office edifice its Manchester parish at the cost of 1 million. Parishioners suggest that what is needed is non a restructuring of parishes based upon

theoretical accounts of parish life, but a reinvigoration of the religious side of the Church. ' *Merely a Church in love with the Eucharist generates holy and legion priestly holidays* ' (Harrington, 1997) quoted one passionate parishioner. The evident commercialization of the Church under such bunch theoretical accounts is a cause of deep concern to parishioners of Salford. They argue parishes should discontinue building-schemes, peculiarly for diocesan offices, and alternatively concentrate on muster of new priests from Brazil, the Philippines and Eastern Europe where their Numberss are increasing. Parishes that are called to shut or blend should merely hold to make so if their corresponding bishoprics are closed or coalesced as good.

In the concluding analysis, it is agreed by most Church and parish leaders that parishes are in a pastoral crisis. A serious idyll and religious reclamation of parish life is required, and there is broad entreaty for this to be done by using to parishes new theoretical account of parish life. The ' cluster ' theoretical account seems both in Britain and the United States, to be the theoretical account of pick. It is thought to supply the practical benefits of streamlining parish costs whilst conveying assorted otherwise disconnected religion communities together. Critics of such theoretical accounts complain of the commercialization of parish life, and name for a return to the simpleness and effectivity of the individual parish theoretical account that worked so good for centuries. A in-between place is to propose ' cluster ' theoretical accounts should be a impermanent theoretical account that can be replaced in the hereafter by the traditional individual parish theoretical account, one time Christianity has recovered its authorization in the United Kingdom.

Bibliography

Books/Journals

- Dolan, J. P. (1989) . *Transforming Parish Ministry: the Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity and Women*. Crossroad, New York.

- Hammersley, J. (1998) . *Training for Parish Ministry*. Blandford Forum: Parish and Peoples.

- Harrington, D. (1997) . *Parish Renewal: Reflecting on the Experience (Vol. 1)* . Black Rock, Co. Dublin.

- Hoge, D. R. (1998) . *Forms of Parish Leadership: Cost and Effectiveness*. Sheed & A ; Ward.

- Hornsby-Smith (1999) . *The Changing Parish: a Study of Parishes, Priests and Parishioners after Vatican II*. Routledge & A ; Kegan Paul, London.

- Lundin, J. W. (1997) . *The Church for an Open Future: Biblical Roots and Parish Renewal*. Fortress Press.

- Mallison, J. (1981) . *Creative Ideas: For Small Groups in the Christian Community*. S. U. Specialist Productions, London.

- Murphy-O'Connor (Cardinal) . *Green Paper: Response and Analysis* , May 2005. Archbishopric of Westminster. The term is believed to hold been foremost used in a 1987 publication of the National Pastoral Life Centre entitled ' Alternative Staffing of Parishes ' .