



The
PRESERVATION
OF OUR
CHURCHES

*The Report of a Church
Assembly Commission*

THE
PRESERVATION
OF OUR
CHURCHES

*being the report of
a Commission appointed
by the Church Assembly
in
June 1951*

CHURCH INFORMATION BOARD
Church House, Dean's Yard, Westminster, S.W.1.

1952

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* Appointed 4 October 1951

† Died 14 September 1951

Secretary: Mr. J. A. Guillum Scott,
Church Assembly,
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London, S.W.1.

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PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PART I—THE PRESENT POSITION

1. The urgency and the extent of the problem of repairs to parochial churches must not be allowed to obscure the fact that in the past thirty years the Church has carried through a vast amount of repair on sounder and more conservative lines than ever before, and that the total of such work is a solid achievement (pp. 16-17).
2. The primary cause of the present state of disrepair of so many churches is the enforced postponement of repairs during the ten years from 1939 onwards owing to the difficulty of obtaining labour, raw materials and licences (pp. 17-18).

PART II—THE FINANCIAL NEED

3. The amount of extra-parochial aid needed to supplement the efforts of parishes in putting their churches into a state of good repair over a period of ten years is estimated to be £4,000,000 (pp. 25-26).
4. Once the present accumulation of repairs has been made good, the annual expenditure needed to keep our parochial churches in a good state of maintenance is estimated, at the present level of costs, to be £750,000 a year; this may require some redistribution of money between districts but should be within the means of the Church (pp. 27-28).

PART III—RAISING THE MONEY

(a) Public Aid

5. The assumption of ownership of churches by the State is not proposed in evidence and is not recommended (pp. 30-31).
6. If legislation is introduced to give effect to the recommendations of the Gowers Report, churches of outstanding historic or architectural interest should qualify for help along with private houses (pp. 32-33).
7. In order to raise the £4,000,000 needed within the next ten years the Church should make her own appeal to Churchpeople and to the nation, and should seek a grant from the Exchequer only if her own appeal should fail to meet with the necessary degree of success (pp. 33-36).
8. If aid from the public funds should be made available at any time for the repair of churches, the hope is expressed that the

precedents of the University Grants Committee and the Arts Council would be followed (p. 36).

9. It is not recommended that the Church should at this stage seek a loan from the Exchequer (p. 37).

10. The financial problem of keeping our churches in good repair has been increased by the sustained high level of taxation and by changes in the law of taxation affecting those who have in the past been generous givers (pp. 37-38).

11. Certain easements in taxation are proposed, namely a restoration of the right of the taxpayer to deduct from his income for the computation of surtax contributions made under a deed of covenant for the repair of churches; the exemption from death duties of money given or bequeathed for the repair of churches; and a more generous allowance as business expenses of contributions made by firms for the repair of churches with which they are connected (pp. 38-41).

12. In suitable cases borough councils should be invited to use their existing powers to make contributions towards the repair of churches with which they have connexions, and similar powers should be sought by statute for other local authorities (pp. 41-43).

(b) Other Forms of Help

13. Professional and similar bodies are invited to "adopt" churches, that is, to assume the responsibility in whole or part for their good maintenance (pp. 43-44).

14. Where owing to changed conditions the intentions of donors can no longer be fulfilled, power should be given to use parochial charities for the repair of churches (pp. 44-45).

15. Where church collections, particularly at harvest festivals, are given to causes which no longer need the same financial help as in the past, they should be used for repairs (p. 45).

16. In suitable cases a voluntary church rate should be made for the financing of repairs (pp. 45-46).

17. The directors of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office, whose surplus funds are derived mainly from the insurance of Church fabrics, are invited to consider how, in addition to their present generous grants for other purposes, they can make a contribution to church repairs (pp. 46-47).

18. Payments for the use of a church for baptisms, weddings and funerals should be encouraged, and the desirability or not of making fixed charges for the benefit of the Repair and Restoration Fund should be examined (pp. 47-48).

19. An appeal overseas should be made (p. 48).

(c) Organization

20. It is recommended that there should be formed a Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches to make a national appeal for funds towards the £4,000,000 needed over the next ten years and to create a county organization; the Archbishops of Canterbury and York should be invited to appoint the trustees (pp. 50-51).

21. A county trust should be created in each county, or group of counties, to help the Historic Churches Preservation Trust in its work (p. 51).

22. Each parish should keep a Repair and Restoration Fund distinct from its other accounts (pp. 51-53).

23. The funds raised by the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches should be given in block grants to the administrators of diocesan funds for allocation to parishes in an order of priority (p. 54).

24. The readiness of the Friends of Ancient English Churches Trust to merge its work in that of the proposed Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches is noted with gratitude (pp. 55-56).

PART IV—INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE

(a) The Present Legal Position

25. It is not recommended that any change should be sought in the present law by which responsibility for the maintenance of the church is vested in the parochial church council; and, in particular, the solution of setting up diocesan church repairs boards analogous to the diocesan dilapidations boards for parsonage houses is rejected (pp. 57-61).

(b) Training of Incumbents and other Responsible Persons

26. Theological colleges are recommended to include lectures on the care of churches in their courses, and have undertaken to do so (p. 62).

27. Further training in the care of churches should be given in post-ordination courses (p. 62).

28. A leaflet prepared by the Commission giving simple guidance in the care of churches should be presented to incumbents on induction and to churchwardens at their admission (pp. 62-63 and Appendix V).

29. A card giving a summary reminder of the essential principles in the care of churches has been prepared by the Commission and should be hung in the vestry of each church (p. 63 and Appendix VI).

30. Lectures on the care of churches should be given with "visual aids" at ruridecanal chapters and other gatherings of clergymen and laymen (pp. 63-64).

(c) Regular Inspection

31. The new Draft Canon CXI, "Of the Survey of Churches," laying down the duty of archdeacons to survey the churches, chapels and churchyards in their archdeaconries at least once in three years, either in person or by the rural dean, is regarded as satisfactory so far as it goes (pp. 64-65).

32. The value of the rural dean's visitation is emphasized, and the Central Council's pamphlet "The Rural Dean's Visitation" is commended (pp. 65-66).

33. Two weaknesses in the existing law with regard to the archdeacon's survey are found, namely that there is no means of enforcing his recommendations save to a limited extent and that he is not usually professionally trained in the care of ancient buildings (pp. 66-67).

34. Though the Commission would like to see all ancient churches inspected twice a year by the same architect, it is content to ask in present circumstances that all churches should be inspected by a qualified architect every five years at least (pp. 67-69).

35. It is proposed that if an archdeacon in his triennial survey should find that the church has not been inspected by a qualified architect within the previous five years, he should be given power, by an amendment of the Faculties Jurisdiction Measure, 1938, to have such an inspection made, the cost to be borne in the first instance by the diocesan funds and recovered from the parish (pp. 70-71).

36. The cost of first and later inspections is examined (pp. 71-73).

37. The suggestion of a national inspectorate for churches is rejected (p. 73).

38. Though the arguments for diocesan inspectorates are stronger, and the Commission welcomes such diocesan schemes of inspection as have come into existence, it is not considered practical or desirable to make them universal (pp. 73-75).

39. It is recommended that in general each parish should make its own arrangements for inspection with some suitable private

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practitioner after consultation with its diocesan advisory committee (pp. 75-76).

(d) Supervision of Repairs

40. The system of diocesan advisory committees co-ordinated by the Central Council for the Care of Churches is regarded as having justified itself, and though some of the weaker committees need strengthening, and more use should be made of the system, no fundamental change is proposed (pp. 76-80).

41. The chief need in order to make the system really effective is to ensure that all repair work is carried out under the supervision of an architect skilled in the care of churches or someone approved by such an architect (pp. 80-81).

42. It is proposed that advisory panels of architects skilled in the care of churches should be appointed for groups of dioceses, and that parishes needing repairs to be done should ask the local panel to recommend a suitable architect, whose specifications would be examined by the panel when desirable (pp. 81-82).

43. Recourse to the local advisory panel would be made a condition of receiving a grant for repairs from funds collected by the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches (pp. 82-83).

(e) Supply of Architects

44. The lack of architects skilled in the repair of ancient churches is regarded as serious, though the supply will to some extent rise with increased demand (pp. 83-84).

45. The need for training in traditional methods of building is urged upon the professional authorities, and the value of working with a master in the art as a pupil or improver is pointed out (pp. 84-85).

(f) Supply of Craftsmen

46. The lack of experienced craftsmen, especially masons, is observed, and the need for further measures to supplement those already taken by the Ministry of Works is urged (pp. 85-87).

47. It is recommended that cathedral workshops should be used as centres for training craftsmen (pp. 87-88).

(g) Parish Church Log-book

48. It is recommended that each incumbent should keep a log-book of all repairs and restoration done in the church, and some notes on how the log-book should be filled in are given by the Commission (pp. 88-89 and Appendix VII).

(h) Memorials in Parish Churches and Churchyards

49. The need to keep in good order the monuments in a church or churchyards as well as the fabric of the church is emphasized, and the practice of handing disused churchyards over to local authorities is deprecated, especially when the ground is cleared of headstones (pp. 89-92).

MAIN POINTS IN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. A sum of £4,000,000 over the next ten years to supplement the efforts of parishes in putting our churches into good repair.
- B. A Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches, with county trusts associated with it, to raise this money.
- C. All churches to be inspected at least once every five years by a qualified architect, thanks to new reserve powers to be vested in archdeacons.
- D. Grants for repairs to be given only to churches that have them done under the supervision of an architect skilled in the care of churches.

[This Report has only the authority of the Commission by which it was prepared.]

INTRODUCTION

We were appointed in pursuance of the following resolution passed by the Church Assembly on 19 June 1951:—

“That a Commission be appointed to advise the Church Assembly on the problems concerned with the repair of churches and with the proposals for securing their regular inspection.”

At an early date we suffered a severe loss in the death of one of our number, Sir Eric Maclagan, whose services to ecclesiastical art and architecture over many years were of the highest order.

The term “church” is not so easy to define as may be supposed, nor have we attempted to define it. But in interpreting our terms of reference we have regarded cathedral and other collegiate churches as being outside the scope of our inquiry, as this was clearly the sense of the debate in the Assembly; and although the problems of their maintenance are heavy, they need separate consideration from those of parochial churches. We have not regarded ourselves as asked to advise on disused and unwanted churches, as a committee under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Norwich was constituted in 1948 to investigate this problem, and the Union of Benefices (Disused Churches) Measure¹, based on the report² of the committee, is now before the Assembly. We have also excluded the repair of war damage from our consideration, as this has already been dealt with by legislation³ after negotiations with the Church authorities⁴. We are naturally not concerned with the Royal chapels or other private chapels. The subject of our inquiry as thus delimited may be regarded as the normal repair of parochial churches. We use the term parochial churches in a sense wider than that of parish churches, but in compiling our statistics we have left it to the good sense of those who have answered our inquiries to say whether chapels of ease, mission churches and dual-purpose halls should be included or not. Owing to this lack of a precise definition of what constitutes a church, there is some uncertainty about the exact number of parochial churches in the use of the Church of England, but as our inquiries have been interpreted

¹ This is published in the Church Assembly series of publications as C.A. 1006 together with an explanatory memorandum C.A. 1006 X.

² C.A. 940.

³ War Damage Act, 1943, Section 69.

⁴ See *The Churches and War Damage*, published for the Churches Main Committee by the Church Information Board.

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they cover 15,779 churches in England, of which about 8,300 were built wholly or mainly before 1537. Though the older churches constitute by far the greater part of the financial problem, we are not limited by any date, and our recommendations apply to all parochial churches in the use of the Church of England.

As a commission of the Church Assembly we have no power to give advice except with regard to churches in the use of the Church of England, and these constitute the greater part of the nation's architectural heritage; but to prevent misunderstanding we should like to state once for all at the outset that some of our recommendations, such as relief of taxation, would naturally apply to churches in the use of any religious body. Some of our proposals could obviously be applied to churches in Wales and Scotland, which are no less a part of our national heritage, and it may be that for some of our recommendations joint or parallel action is desirable.

We have received evidence of the highest value from a large number of distinguished bodies and individuals to whom we express our deep thanks. A list is given in Appendix 1. Their willing co-operation is evidence that when a call is made on behalf of church fabrics the response will not be lacking.

We have enjoyed the great advantage of having Mr. J. A. Guillum Scott, secretary to the Church Assembly, as secretary to the Commission, and we gratefully acknowledge the help that we have received from him and from the members of his staff, who have served us with unflinching efficiency and consideration. If the arrangements for the taking of evidence, the circulation of papers and the holding of meetings had not been made so smoothly we could not possibly have finished our task within twelve months of our appointment.

The parish churches of England are places in which the service of God is offered. For this purpose they were built, and without it they would lose their prime significance. But they are rightly treasured far beyond the ranks of those who assemble in them week by week to offer that worship. They are the chief part of the nation's architectural wealth and a store-house of its artistic and historical treasures. Thanks partly to our immunity from invasion for a thousand years and from civil strife for several centuries, and partly to the wise and loving care of former generations, there is no country in the world that has such a rich and varied collection of parish churches. The affection inspired by them is felt not only by those who use them regularly, but by those who listen only to the silent sermons that they preach every day of the

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week to all who pass by. This affection is shown by the desire of many people who do not normally attend our services to be married in our churches, to have their children baptized in them and to lay their mortal remains after death in their shade. Many who are personally indifferent to the practice of religion like to think that worship has been offered continuously in our parish churches from days before the Conqueror set foot in England; and few would see without a pang of regret even a single one of our ancient shrines fall into ruin. The diffusion of so much architectural and artistic wealth throughout the countryside has helped to keep alive the love of beautiful things generally; and the existence in so many towns and hamlets of these monuments of past ages has helped to form much that is best in the English character such as its respect for tradition and love of the proved way.

The English churches are as varied as the hands that made them and the materials out of which they are built. Every age is represented from Saxon days to our own, and every material from timber to concrete. As we go round the parishes some will linger over the simple shrines of our Saxon forefathers and others will rest awhile under the solid and satisfying arches of the Norman builders; many will find their chief delight in the various stages of the Gothic style, in which stone is worked like lace, each moving imperceptibly into the next as the builders gathered confidence until they culminate in the miracle of the English Perpendicular; but the English genius did not fail with the Middle Ages, and the recovery of respect for the Renaissance and Georgian churches is one of the notable achievements of recent years for which much of the credit goes to the Central Council for the Care of Churches. The churches built nearer to our own times do not always achieve the same standard of excellence, but here and there we find lovely churches where the builder has successfully found expression in a traditional style or in a new medium; and even those whose disappearance would not be regretted on purely artistic grounds are the churches of worshipping communities, usually large industrial communities; they are indispensable to the religious life of the nation, and their repair presents the same financial problems.

The parish churches of England range in size from the tiny church of Culbone nestling in an Exmoor combe to churches of cathedral proportions such as Boston "Stump" dominating the Lincolnshire landscape. There is still standing from Saxon days at Greensted, near Ongar in Essex, a church nave that is built out of oak-trunks split longitudinally; and the half-timbered towers of the Welsh border are well known. Every variety of stone is used, generally quarried from its own neighbourhood where that could

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be done. No artistic unity is more complete than an English village built around its parish church, the blocks for each hewn from the same quarry, and churches and houses roofed with the same material. In their power to resist the elements the stones used range from granite to chalk. A few of the loveliest churches of England are built out of the soft chalk of the Wiltshire Downs. Kentish rag stone is used for a number of churches in and around London, but it has not always fared well in the atmosphere of the metropolis. The austere flints of East Anglia and the glowing red sandstone of the West Country have alike been called into service. The limestone beds in the great Jurassic belt running from Dorset to Yorkshire have been used in all their rich profusion. Some of the limestones, such as Portland stone, when properly chosen and weathered and dressed as they were by Sir Christopher Wren, have made a brave showing against the play of wind and rain for centuries, but many of them are easily worn away, the Oxfordshire limestones notoriously; and—this is a danger—to many eyes they are never lovelier than when in decay.

One fact that emerges from even so slight a sketch of the parish churches of England is their infinite variety. They were not built all at one time according to a master plan, but by divers persons at different times as the spirit moved them and according to their abilities and local conditions. This infinite variety has been preserved through the ages because their maintenance has been the responsibility of thousands of scattered persons. Any proposals for putting and keeping the churches of England into a sound state of repair must be such as to preserve this rich variety. The need for some central help is not a reason for trying to make them conform to some preconceived pattern or favourite architectural style.

It may be taken for granted that extra-parochial help is essential. As we have already said, about 8,300 of the churches we are considering are ancient churches, built mainly before the close of the Middle Ages. In the succeeding centuries there have been great movements of population, and in a very large number of cases it is now quite out of the question for the parishes to maintain their churches by their own efforts. The regional differences which we have been considering and the peculiar problems of certain churches are well brought out in evidence submitted to us by the Central Council for the Care of Churches :

“The problem . . . is one very subject to variation of character and severity in different localities, and sometimes in different dioceses. For example, practically throughout the Eastern counties, including Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, there is the special problem of many fine and often very large churches with

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elaborate inaccessible roofs, susceptible to decay and costly to repair, in an area often sparsely populated. Then, in the Midlands, we have lofty spires, costly to scaffold and repair, often in areas of small population. The West Country abounds in rich and tall towers and in 'waggon' roofs, many of which are plastered within and the true state of their timber work is unknown. The West Midlands, and also parts of Lincolnshire, suffer from the extensive use of a soft type of stone, very liable to surface decay, impossible to arrest, very costly to repair. The Home Counties have their own structural problems, including the poor wearing qualities of Kentish rag stone in the London area and in Kent and South Essex, but for the most part the area is prosperous and heavily populated.

"The same sort of analysis could be made for the north of England, but with a big difference. In some areas, including, for example, practically the whole diocese of Manchester, there are few old churches. Those that remain are venerated for their antiquity and carefully watched over. Among the 'new' churches there is the problem of the shoddier type of building, run up to meet the needs of the expanding population of the 1830s-1860s. These often need constant repair, but deserve no special care or experts' services. In parts of the dioceses of Newcastle, Durham, Bradford, Blackburn and elsewhere, however, the new churches were built of excellent and hard-wearing stone, often small, without towers, and with slate-covered deal roofs, which present no severe problems of maintenance. The remaining ancient churches there have been largely recased in the 19th century in the same good stone, retaining their ancient features inside rather than outside, and often, too, they have modern roofs. On the other hand Cheshire has the problem of abundant fine woodwork, but countered by a—generally speaking—prosperous population (country districts serving often as a dormitory to the towns). But large areas of Yorkshire, a little of Lancashire, and most of Nottinghamshire are almost wholly rural with all the characteristics common to the south of a thin population and large and fine churches."

PART I—THE PRESENT POSITION

(A) WORK OF PAST THIRTY YEARS

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in evidence states :

“During the course of its work up and down the country the society faces time and time again the saddening sight of blocked water heads and downpipes, cracked and missing tiles and slates, etc., vegetation in the gutters, dry areas overgrown, all combining to produce damp in the walls and floors and penetration of wet through the roof, with the consequent disastrous effect upon the fabric.”

The Incorporated Church Building Society and the Pilgrim Trust make similar comments. But such strictures, justified as they are, must be seen in their true perspective. The 15,779 churches with which we are concerned are spread over more than 12,000 parishes, and it would be surprising if there were not occasional instances of neglect. These get reported because a tumble-down church has “news value” whereas a well-kept church has none. But in the evidence submitted to us there is no suggestion of widespread neglect on the part of those responsible for our church fabrics, nor could such a charge be sustained. Not only does the condition of English churches compare favourably with those of any country known to us, but the parish churches of England constitute a far higher proportion of the country’s architectural wealth than any other class of building, and this is due to the loving and expert attention which they have received from successive generations, including the present. We endorse the evidence of the Central Council for the Care of Churches :

“The urgency and the extent of the existing problem must not be allowed to obscure the fact that in the past thirty years the Church has carried through a vast amount of repair to its ancient buildings on sounder and more conservative lines than ever

before, and that the total of such work represents a very solid achievement."

(B) CAUSES OF DISREPAIR

If many of our churches are in a serious state of disrepair today, this arises mainly from causes outside the control of the Church. As we see them, the causes for the present state of disrepair are as follows :

(i) Accumulation of Repairs since 1939

The primary cause is undoubtedly the enforced postponement during the war and the first five years of the peace. The right way to keep buildings in a good state of repair is to carry out the repair as soon as defects are noticed. If repairs are not done promptly, the damage spreads, and the cost becomes much greater. This is true of all buildings, but it is specially true of ancient fabrics, and we emphasise again that over 8,300 of the churches with which we are concerned were built more than 400 years ago.

From 1940 onwards it has not been possible to carry out any substantial building work without a licence. For about ten years it was difficult to obtain licences except for the most urgent and essential repair to churches; and even when licences could be obtained the scarcity of labour and raw materials put further obstacles in the way. All who have submitted evidence to us on this point agree in thinking that this is the main cause of the present state of disrepair. The Pilgrim Trust, after reviewing other factors, states:

"As the Church is the possessor of more ancient buildings, particularly vulnerable to neglect, than any other single owner in the land, this factor has borne more hardly upon it than upon any other institution. In the Trustees' view this long period of enforced neglect is the principal and primary cause of the present state of serious disrepair of so many parish churches."

The Central Council for the Care of Churches, after noting that there was some cause for anxiety even before the war, continues:

"The cessation of all work for ten years, due to the war and its effects, and the steep rise in costs are main causes of the rapid acceleration of decay."

The Georgian Group concurs:

"It seems to us likely that even during the twenty years preceding 1939 a large number of churches were under-repaired and becoming dilapidated. The reasons for this are not hard to

seek, viz. the falling-off in churchgoing and the heavier taxation of the incomes of the wealthier churchgoers who could, hitherto, be relied upon to find the money to keep their churches in a reasonable state of repair. The situation has become very much worse during the past twelve years owing to non-repair of churches during the war, the frequent difficulty since in obtaining licences to repair them, and the very greatly increased cost of building work."

The Pilgrim Trust further observes that

"a certain element of encouragement can be found in this gloomy situation in that if the present accumulation of repairs can be dealt with and eliminated by specific action the problem of keeping our churches in good repair thereafter will be more manageable."

This is true, but we are forced to recognize certain factors which make the proper maintenance of churches more difficult than it used to be.

(ii) Increasing Age of Our Churches

Among these factors we must put the increasing age of our churches. However skilfully the architect may have prepared and fabricated his materials, time cannot fail to make its ravages after centuries. Under the play of the elements stones suffer physical and even chemical changes that the most skilful attention cannot arrest. To the accustomed forces of decay there has been added since the Industrial Revolution a new menace in the acid-laden smoke from our industrial towns, which not only eats away the surface of our historic buildings but forces its way into the interstices and tears asunder great blocks of masonry. Every decade that goes by sees some churches passing to a category needing more frequent repair. The Renaissance churches are now beginning to need as careful attention as the medieval churches used to demand, and the medieval churches need more constant attention if we are to hand them down to our descendants in as good a condition as that in which we have received them. We are proud of the age of our churches, but we have to pay a price for it.

There is a special aspect of this problem of the ageing of our churches that is now forcing itself on our attention. The period from 1820 onwards was an active period of churchbuilding, and hitherto these churches have not made heavy demands for their maintenance. They are now just beginning to need substantial repairs. St. Pancras Church in London, built in 1820 and now appealing for £20,000, is a case in point. Many of the churches put

up between 1790 and 1860 are not well-built, and we must expect an increasing liability for their repair.

(iii) Changing Balance of Town and Country

The permanent problem has also been increased by the changing balance of town and country, and particularly by changes among the country clergy, and it is in the countryside that the problem is most acute. In former days the incumbent usually had only one church to look after and he lived beside it. His duties were far less exacting than they are today, and he had more time and opportunity to look after the fabric. It is also likely that he had more understanding than his modern successor of what needs to be done to keep a building in good repair. He had probably been brought up in the country and did not need to be told that gutters ought to be cleaned out after the fall of leaves and so on through the whole of a countryman's lore. As often as not he had been brought up in a leisured and cultivated family, and at an early age his eyes had been opened by education and travel to a skilled appreciation of ancient buildings. Today, even if he has only one church, the country incumbent is harassed by many cares unknown to his predecessor, and it is possible that his benefice is held with another several miles away. It is more than likely that he was bred in a town and has never acquired the countryman's instinct for knowing what needs to be done and the countryman's resourcefulness in doing it himself, and though his experience may be in many ways richer and more valuable to his parishioners than his predecessors', it may not have given him the same "feel" for an ancient building. Moreover, many of the skilled craftsmen in the village who might have kept him right in past days have now migrated to the towns, and even if he knows what ought to be done it is even harder to find the skilled labour in the countryside than in the towns. Migration to the towns has also reduced the number of people on whom he can call for financial support for the fabric, except in those villages which have become "dormitories" for neighbouring towns. We know that these changes cannot be arrested, and we know that they have their good as well as their bad side, but we are bound to agree with the Central Council for the Care of Churches in this evidence:

"In country districts, where the problem is most acute, we may fairly attribute the deterioration of standards in part at least to the union of benefices, which gives the clergy less time and opportunity for supervision, to shortage and cost of labour for sexton's work and the like, to decline in the incidence of skilled craftsmen among the congregation, who would call attention to

such defects, to general rural depopulation, and to a decline in the number of country-bred men among the younger clergy."

(iv) Financial Difficulties

There is also a purely financial problem which was making the repair of churches increasingly difficult even before the catastrophe of the war. It has already been noted in the evidence quoted from the Georgian Group. There has been a marked decline in the regular attendance at our churches, not perhaps in comparison with 1939 but certainly in comparison with 1914, and the sustained high level of taxation makes it impossible for those who have hitherto borne the main burden of repairing the fabrics to continue to do so. In sparsely-populated rural areas with large churches their repair would always have been beyond the resources of the parish if there were not usually one or a few parishioners prepared to dip deeply into their purses for the purpose. Today they may be quite as willing but they no longer have the means.

The Pilgrim Trust concurs in this analysis and shows that the problem is not one of church fabrics alone but of the whole cultural life of the country.

"Post-war legislation and taxation have virtually removed from that section of the community which by long tradition gave generous financial support to the Church the margin of wealth from which they had previously fostered the things of the spirit, of the intellect, and of 'culture' generally in which they believed. The far-reaching nature of this economic and social revolution, and of its effects upon the whole structure of our national life as we have known it, will perhaps only become fully apparent in the course of a generation, but the Pilgrim Trustees have received abundant evidence of it in connection with the many enterprises in the cultural and aesthetic field with which they are concerned apart from the affairs of the Church of England."

The Pilgrim Trust adds:

"In common with other institutions the Church has perhaps been slow to appreciate the effect upon itself of these great economic and social changes. Surplus wealth has now been transferred into the hands of a wholly different section of the community. It has also been broken up into smaller units; money must be obtained in smaller individual sums from a greatly increased number of people; but that some degree of surplus wealth does exist in these smaller units in the hands of what may be broadly termed the upper wage-earning classes is beyond question. The Church's problem derives from the fact that this section of the community, taken as a whole, consists largely of

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those who are not by upbringing 'Churchpeople,' and who have no tradition of giving to the needs of the Church or to any 'cultural' cause. They require to be educated in the art of giving to these objects."

We associate ourselves with these words, but the process of education will take time, and the problem of the fabrics is urgent.

(C) PRESENT FINANCIAL EFFORT

Such figures as are available show that Churchpeople have not been laggard in their duty towards the fabrics. On the basis of such parochial statistical returns as had been received, the Archbishop of Canterbury was able to inform the Church Assembly on 19 June 1951 that in 1950 the Church was estimated to have spent nearly £500,000 on ordinary maintenance charges and nearly £1,000,000 towards overtaking arrears and dealing with emergency structural repairs. It is not claimed that all this money was raised in 1950; clearly much of it is money accumulated in previous years when it could not be spent. But it is a magnificent effort on the part of the parishes to meet the problem, and figures which we shall give later show that if such an effort could be sustained for a period of say five years the problem of extraordinary repairs would cease to exist.

Included in the above figures are the contributions made by various bodies to supplement the efforts of parishioners. We know we shall be following the wishes of all Churchpeople in expressing our gratitude for this help. The Society of Antiquaries has the William and Jane Morris Fund, established under the wills of Miss Jane and Miss May Morris "for or towards the protection and repair of ancient churches or other ancient buildings or monuments." The Society came into full possession of the estate in 1940, and the annual income is about £800; from it grants are made usually to churches of architectural importance, though occasionally for such purposes as the preservation of tombs or sculpture or churchyard monuments. The Incorporated Church Building Society formed in 1818 exists mainly to help in providing additional churches, but in 1949 it made 96 grants for repairs (62 for ancient churches) at a cost of £7,155; in 1950 it made 116 grants (77 for ancient churches) at a cost of £7,870; and in 1951 it made 94 grants (70 for ancient churches) at a cost of £6,060. It is disturbed by the increasing number of applications. In the 21 years since the Pilgrim Trust was founded grants amounting to £87,846 have been made to 175 parish churches in England. (In addition grants totalling £134,660 have been made to 20 cathedrals, about £17,000 to the Central Council for the Care of Churches, of which £15,025 was given for cathedrals and parish churches on the recommendation of

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the Central Council, and about £150,000 for the better housing of books and records belonging to the Church of England.) The Trustees further tell us :

“From 1930 to the end of 1939 the Trustees assisted in the repair of no more than 62 parish churches with a total sum of £15,890, or an average of £256 per church. This indicates that up till the war the problem of parish church repair was by no means out of hand. It was during the year 1947 that the Trustees first became aware of the magnitude of the change that had been brought about by the war and its consequences.”

The Trustees restricted their grants in 1949 and in 1951 suspended grants to parish churches pending the production of a “national scheme.”

From this survey it will be seen that the problem of church fabrics is partly a matter of raising the money needed to put them and keep them in good repair, and partly a matter of minimizing the need for repair in future by proper maintenance.

PART II—THE FINANCIAL NEED

The financial problem falls into two parts: (a) the raising of sufficient money to put our churches into good repair after ten years of enforced postponement, and (b) the raising of enough money annually to keep them in good repair thereafter.

(A) THE IMMEDIATE FINANCIAL PROBLEM

(i) Difficulty of Obtaining Architects' Surveys

When we began our work we found much anxiety about the extent of the problem but little precise information. We were confronted by estimates of the sum needed to put our churches in good repair "all at one go" ranging from £2,000,000 to £5,500,000, but they were admittedly little more than guesses. We found ourselves obliged to concur with the evidence of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, that "the great obstacle to a constructive policy is the absence of reliable information regarding the present position." As the Society of Antiquaries states in evidence, a precise estimate could be provided only by an architect's survey of each church, and even this would not be conclusive, as damage often comes to light only as the work proceeds. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings presses us for "a quick preliminary inspection sufficient only to establish and to assess the condition of the churches and to place them in categories in order of priority." We doubt, however, whether anything short of a thorough inspection would tell us more than we know already, and we have had to bear in mind further evidence from the Central Council for the Care of Churches about the small number of architects known to the Council for their specialist skill in the care of ancient churches; and even if 500 such architects could be found willing to survey each church for a fee of ten guineas "this would occupy at least two years and cost some £160,000." In the meantime there would be two further years of deterioration.

(ii) Inquiries of Archdeacons

This Commission does not in any case have authority to spend such a sum, nor do we think it is necessary in order to get a

sufficiently accurate statistical foundation to be a basis for action. At a later stage it will be seen that we propose a system of inspection by qualified architects, and within two years their first inspections will provide a more authoritative estimate of the sum required. But we need not wait for such an authoritative estimate before beginning the raising of money and starting the task of repair. In its place we sent out a series of questions to archdeacons, who have themselves been able to obtain the information from rural deans and incumbents. We asked each archdeacon to state the number of churches in his archdeaconry and the number in need of repair at the present time; of those needing repair, we asked in how many cases could the repairs be done without extra-parochial help; in the cases needing extra-parochial help we asked in how many cases the total sum needed for repairs would be less than £1,000, in how many cases would it lie between £1,000 and £2,000, in how many cases would it be between £2,000 and £5,000 and in how many cases would it exceed £5,000. Any incumbent may be reasonably expected to answer for his own church questions framed within these broad limits, and although he might not be able to give a more precise answer a collation of all the returns by well-established statistical methods enables us to get an estimate for the total liability in which we can place a fair degree of confidence. It is a commonplace of statistical methods that the whole can often be calculated even though the parts are indeterminate, provided there are enough parts—and in this case we are dealing with over 15,000 parts. We were furnished with returns by all the 104 archdeacons of the provinces of Canterbury and York, though there are a few gaps in the information supplied, and we are grateful for their co-operation, which has enabled the Church to get a well-founded picture of the magnitude of this problem for the first time.

In addition we took the opportunity of asking each archdeacon for the number of medieval churches under his oversight, the number of post-medieval churches built before 1800, and the number of churches built since 1800. It is surprising that no authoritative estimate of these figures had previously been made. For this purpose we defined the Middle Ages as ending with the dissolution of the monasteries in 1537, but even so there is bound to be some uncertainty in the figures. The dates of construction are not always known, and even when they are there must be some uncertainty in placing churches built in one era and completed or partly rebuilt in another. Our choice of the date 1800 has no architectural significance—1837 would have been better for that purpose—but is meant only to divide the modern from the older churches. Even

though there is some uncertainty in assessing both the total number of churches and the number in the several categories, we believe the figures we have obtained for the number of medieval, post-medieval and modern churches may be a useful guide.

When we came to examine the returns we first looked through the returns for any specially high or specially low figures in case our questions should have been misunderstood. In some cases these high or low returns were explained by the soft or resistant quality of the building stone in the neighbourhood, and in a few cases, which it would be invidious to specify, by the known zeal of the diocese in the matter of repairs. Where there was no obvious explanation, or where the figures seemed otherwise suspicious, we wrote to the archdeacon to make sure that our questions had been properly understood, and in some cases obtained corrections. We were informed that in some important cases, such as London, the estimates were based upon architects' surveys, and this gave us a useful check upon the reasonableness of other figures not so based. Four archdeacons are members of the Commission and their returns made in the knowledge of exactly what we had in mind have also helped in checking the others. When we had made all our checks, we were satisfied that the variations in the returns could be correlated with the nature of the building stone and other known factors, and that the returns provided a sound basis, for the first time, of the amount of central help needed to supplement the efforts of parishioners. A synopsis is given in Appendix II.

(iii) Analysis of Returns

The returns for the 99 archdeaconries which have been given in full show that out of 15,166 churches, 3,509 or 23 per cent. stand in need of structural repair at present. In the case of 1,496 churches the parishes can undertake the full financial responsibility for the repairs. In the 2,013 cases needing extra-parochial help, there are 1,174 churches needing repairs costing less than £1,000; we assumed as reasonable that the average cost would be £600, which gives a total liability in this class of £704,400. There are 447 churches whose need for repairs lies between £1,000 and £2,000, and, noticing that the number of churches in each class falls as we ascend the scale, and therefore that there will be more churches at the lower end of the scale than in the higher, we assumed an average need of £1,350, which gives a total liability in the class of £603,450. There are 269 churches needing repairs costing between £2,000 and £5,000; we assumed that the average is £3,000, which gives a total liability in this class of £807,000. There are 123 churches needing more than £5,000 worth of repairs. We were at once struck by the

high cost of repairing the relatively small number of churches in this class, and as there is no obvious average figure we sent an additional request to archdeacons for their estimate of the total liability for this class in their archdeaconries. Most archdeacons have, in fact, given us the estimate for the individual churches; they range from a little over £5,000 to as much as £46,000 for one church. We have been given figures for 87 churches in this class requiring an estimated expenditure of £832,300, an average of £9,566 a church. On this basis the total liability for the 123 churches in this class is £1,176,518. Adding up these totals we see that the gross liabilities for repairs to the 2,013 churches needing extra-parochial help is £3,291,368. But this covers only 99 archdeaconries out of 104, or 15,166 churches out of 15,779. Assuming that the remaining churches will need repairs on the same scale, we arrive at a gross liability of £3,424,403 for the whole of England for repairs to churches in those cases where extra-parochial help is needed. For practical purposes we may take this as £3,500,000; our margins of error do not allow greater precision, nor is greater precision necessary. This is not, of course, the total potential bill for all churches because it omits those parishes which are able to assume responsibility for their own repairs; we are now concerned only with the amount of extra-parochial help needed.

(iv) Need for £4,000,000 to Supplement Efforts of Parishes

In order to assess the amount of extra-parochial help needed we must first of all deduct what the 2,013 churches will themselves be able to contribute to the cost. We think it reasonable to suggest that over a period of ten years they should contribute £1,000,000, which is an average of about £500 a church. In assessing this figure we have taken into account that the churches are very often in country parishes with small populations. But we also think it prudent to make provision for undisclosed damage, which so often comes to light when repairs are begun, for the further deterioration which will have taken place simply as a result of the efflux of time before the ten years envisaged for the completion of the repairs, and for the rise in prices which has set in even since our inquiries started. We estimate that the sum needed to provide against these contingencies is £1,500,000, and we reach a figure of £4,000,000 as the sum needing to be centrally raised to supplement the efforts of parishes in meeting their repairs.

There are a few checks which we have been able to make to test the accuracy of our figures. The Pilgrim Trustees tell us that

from 1 January 1949 to 30 June 1951 they received appeals from 325 churches which set out to raise a total of £719,629 for repairs, or £2,214 a church. In the archdeacons' returns there are 2,013 churches needing a total of £3,291,368 for repairs, which works out at £1,635 a church. It may be presumed that those parishes that applied to the Pilgrim Trust had a rather greater liability for repairs than the average. The amounts already raised from other sources at the time when the 325 churches made their applications to the Pilgrim Trust was £264,781 or £815 a church. We are assuming a contribution of £1,000,000 from rather more than 2,000 churches or nearly £500 a church. As the Pilgrim Trust figure will include some extra-parochial money, the correlation is near enough.

(B) THE REGULAR FINANCIAL NEED

We now turn to an assessment of the sum needed annually to keep our churches in good repair once the present accumulation is overcome. This is made difficult both by lack of material for forming a judgment and also by the fact that we have to contemplate a period ten years hence. We cannot attempt to forecast the course of prices for so long a period. We can only make our calculations on the basis of present values, recognizing that further inflation would greatly increase the money need.

The parochial statistical returns, at the time when they were analysed by the Central Board of Finance for the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech, showed that over 4,000 churches had spent £232,513 in 1950 on normal repairs, an average of £54 a church; this seems intrinsically a reasonable figure to us. We have another rough check in figures furnished by the Church Commissioners, who are responsible for the upkeep of 1,452 chancels, wholly or partly; in 782 cases this responsibility falls upon the Commissioners as the owners of rectorial property and in 670 cases as trustees where the incumbent was until 1927 personally responsible.¹ The Commissioners inform us that in the three years 1948-49, 1949-50 and 1950-51 they repaired 131 chancels at an average cost of £148 9s. 3d., which is roughly an average of £50 a year; this was for the chancels only, but no doubt the Commissioners like others had an accumulation of repairs to undertake, and an average of £50 a year for normal repairs to the whole church at present prices seems a fair provision. The Central Council for the Care of Churches says: "The size and complexity of church buildings, apart from age and materials, varies so much that it is hard to suggest a suitable figure for annual expenditure on the maintenance of an 'average' church.

¹ The legal responsibility for repairs is dealt with below, pp. 57-59.

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Our architectural advisers name £50 as the correct figure for today." The Central Council is at pains to make clear that this £50 is the average sum required to be *raised* each year, though less would be spent in some years and more would be needed in others. On this basis the Central Council gives the total annual requirement for normal repairs as "perhaps just over £ $\frac{3}{4}$ million" a year, and we are not prepared to be more definite.

This figure of £750,000 a year is the total sum needed. Most parishes will probably be able to raise all the money needed for their own normal repairs, especially if they spend a certain sum regularly on maintenance and do not allow major repairs to accumulate. But there will be a residue needing extra-parochial help. It should be within the capacity of most churches to raise £50 a year for repairs, but some will need more than the average, and these are as likely as not to be in country parishes with small populations. There will therefore need to be some redistribution of moneys to the extent of perhaps £100,000 a year. This would be the amount of extra-parochial help needed for normal repairs. It would call for some central machinery of collection and distribution, but not such elaborate machinery as will be needed to raise £4,000,000 in ten years. To this inescapable task we must now address ourselves.

PART III—RAISING THE MONEY

The financial problems of putting our churches into a good state of repair and of maintaining them in a good state of repair thereafter are of a very different order of magnitude. There are, however, many considerations common to both problems, and it will be convenient to treat them together.

(A) PUBLIC AID

(i) *Some Expressions of Opinion*

It is often supposed that the sum needed to put our churches in good repair is so great that it cannot be raised without help from the State. The Pilgrim Trustees in evidence submitted to us say:

“The Pilgrim Trustees may be permitted to express their opinion that . . . the sum needed is unlikely to be wholly raised without some substantial aid from State funds.”

The Georgian Group, after noting that “The sum of money needed to finance the cost of properly repairing the 10,000 odd churches built prior to 1837 cannot be less than £2,000,000 and might be as much as £4,000,000” adds:

“It seems to us that this is a sum beyond the capacity of the Church to raise, and that it is both necessary and appropriate to invoke the financial aid of the State.”

The Society of Antiquaries

“appreciates the complexity of the subject before the Commission and can understand the difficulties which may hinder the Church from accepting any substantial grant from Government funds, or surrendering property in buildings to the Government. These things have been taken into account, and in deference to them some far-reaching proposals have been omitted. But the Society has not hesitated to advocate State aid, or aid from sources outside the Church, in circumstances described below, towards establishing a permanent organization for inspection and repair.”

The Central Council for the Care of Churches in their report *The Repair of Churches*¹ presented to the Church Assembly in June 1951 said:

“Some of us are averse from any suggestion of State aid, but

¹ C.A. 999.

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in view of the increasing disquietude among those specially interested in such matters throughout the country such an approach can hardly be ruled out if no other means can be found."

This suggestion roused much discussion in the ensuing debate in the Church Assembly.

In some previous discussions of this question what has been envisaged under the term State aid appears to be a grant from the Exchequer, either a single grant to meet the present emergency or a recurring annual grant. But a grant from the Exchequer is only one of many forms that could be taken by public aid—a wider conception than State aid. We examine the various possibilities in turn.

(ii) *State Ownership?*

It has not been suggested to us in evidence that the State or the local authorities should take over the ownership of our churches and the responsibility for their maintenance, as is the case in some European countries. Where this has happened, the explanation is often historical rather than architectural. In France, where the cathedrals and certain churches classified by the *Beaux Arts* are owned by the State and other churches by the communes, this has come about partly through the nationalization of churches in the French Revolution, partly through the building of churches by the State, departments or communes in the period of the concordat, and partly through the failure to set up the *associations culturelles* envisaged in the law of separation of 1905. So far as relations between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities are concerned, the friction of past years seems now to have given place to a spirit of mutual tolerance. So far as the architectural merits of the repairs under this system are concerned, the drastic restoration carried out by Viollet le Duc has been justly criticized by subsequent generations, but at the present time the quality of the work done depends on the zeal and good taste of the religious and civil authorities and the architects employed; no general conclusion can be deduced.

Apart from France, we have had the benefit of evidence from Italy, Spain, Greece, Denmark and Sweden, in all of which there is some measure of help for the maintenance of churches of historic or architectural interest. As the relations of Church and State in England have taken a very different pattern, and as no one has suggested to us that we should follow the continental practice, we do not pursue this question, but it may be useful to consider two examples nearer home.

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In Scotland both Glasgow Cathedral and Dunblane Cathedral, which are in the use of the Church of Scotland, have been owned by the Crown since the Reformation. The ownership is complete; neither the minister nor the kirk session has any kind of control over the building. The Ministry of Works appoints and pays a uniformed custodian and fixes opening and closing times. Inside the building, without Crown permission, there may be no marriages, interments, monuments, tablets, nor meetings or services other than the Presbyterian parish services. At Glasgow the fittings are the property of the kirk session, but before 1935 were supplied by the Glasgow Corporation.

This is the legal position, which sounds rigorous but in practice does not seem to be burdensome. The ministry co-operates with the kirk authorities. No attempt is made to intervene in matters of faith or worship, and the cathedrals are not open to sightseers during services. Where the requirements of medieval studies and the reformed religion tend to become contradictory, improvements consistent with the former are not proceeded with to the detriment of the latter. In Glasgow Cathedral, when new fittings were proposed, it was realized that these should not only harmonize with the fabric but also be suitable for Presbyterian religious observances. The system is being thoroughly tested at the present time by the amount of work going on in the cathedral, such as new pews, light fittings, doors, draught screens and re-glazing of windows.

In England the Ministry of Works has no responsibility for maintaining cathedral churches. For historical reasons to be described later it maintains the Chapter House and Pyx Chamber in Westminster Abbey. It also maintains several Royal chapels and one parish church, St. Mary in Castro at Dover, by reason of it being situated in the Crown property of Dover Castle. Its Department of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings does excellent work in the preservation of some of the great disused ecclesiastical buildings of the country. It is generally recognized that this department has evolved a school of repair of which the nation may justly be proud, and that it is free from the criticisms directed against the earlier French and German schools of restoration, now happily much modified. We welcome the opportunity of acknowledging also the generous policy that has permitted the department to give its advice and services free of all charge whenever they have been requested.

For the sake of completeness we have felt it desirable to include in our report the above brief reference to State ownership and maintenance of churches, but it may be assumed that in England any public help would not take this form. Where historical

developments have not decreed otherwise, and the necessary funds are forthcoming, it is obviously best that the religious body which worships in a church should own and maintain it.

With this much preface, we turn to the various forms that public aid might take.

(iii) Help for Historic Buildings

We begin with a consideration of action that may be taken by the Government and Parliament to give help for the upkeep of historic buildings in general, partly because this is an immediately pertinent question, but also because it brings out most of the principles involved.

The question has arisen because of the difficulties owners are finding in maintaining the great houses they have inherited from their ancestors. In 1950 the Chancellor of the Exchequer appointed a Committee on Houses of Outstanding Historic or Architectural Interest under the chairmanship of Sir Ernest Gowers. The Committee did not include churches in its survey, and most of its recommendations would not apply to churches. But some of its recommendations could be applied to churches of outstanding historic interest or architectural merit. The Committee recommended the creation of a Historic Buildings Council, and it suggested that this Council should have power to make grants or loans. "The most usual occasion for its exercise would be when necessary repairs to the fabric of a house are beyond the owner's means" (Para. 154). In considering grants or loans in aid of ordinary upkeep the Committee commented: "We are on more questionable ground. But we do not think that even this should be ruled out altogether" (Para. 155). The Committee sets out admirably the case for enabling the owner of a historic house to maintain it as a place to be lived in, and there is a parallel case for enabling the owners of a historic church to maintain it as a place to be worshipped in. Though the Gowers Committee did not have this problem in its terms of reference, it can hardly be omitted when legislation to give effect to the recommendations is being considered; and though we do not suggest that action in the one case should wait upon the other, it is not to be thought that Christian England would make for the house of God a less worthy provision than it is prepared to make for the houses of private persons.

Should the Church welcome a provision to make churches of outstanding interest eligible along with houses of outstanding interest?

Let us consider exactly what is involved if the recommendations of the Gowers Report are followed. Not all the churches in the use of

the Church of England would qualify for such help, but only those regarded by the Historic Buildings Council as being of "outstanding historic or architectural interest." Where the buildings used by other communions come under this description they would qualify equally with those of the Church of England; and churches, whether of the Church of England or of other religious bodies, would qualify on the same footing as secular buildings. If help were given to a church, whether of the Church of England or of any other communion, it would not be *qua* church but *qua* historic building.

If no unacceptable conditions were proposed—and we have no reason to think they would be—we do not see that there could be any objection to such a provision. We do not for a moment suggest that an ancient church can be regarded simply as an ancient monument. But a building which is primarily a place of worship may also be an ancient monument, and there is no reason why, in this secondary capacity, it should not qualify for any help given to ancient monuments generally. If the suggestion of the Gowers Report is followed and the Historic Buildings Council is made a semi-autonomous body free of direct ministerial supervision, a qualifying church need have no more compunction in applying for a grant to the Historic Buildings Council than to the Incorporated Church Building Society or the Pilgrim Trust. To turn to a different field of illustration, it need have no more compunction than an ordinand who applies for such help as is available from local authorities for the purpose of enabling young persons generally to complete their vocational training. No one regards such help as a contribution from the State to training for the ministry; it is help given generally for vocational training. In the same way monies received from the Historic Buildings Council would not be help for the maintenance of church fabrics as such but help for buildings of outstanding interest generally.

Before we leave this subject one *caveat* needs to be entered. It is improbable that a very large sum of money will be available for help to historic buildings, and even if churches are made eligible for help their share of the whole will not go a long way towards meeting the present need. If churches are made eligible for such help this should not in itself preclude consideration of more substantial direct help from the Exchequer if it should prove necessary; and to such consideration we now turn.

(iv) An Exchequer Grant?

By State aid for church fabrics is generally understood a grant from the Exchequer. Such a grant might be either an annual grant

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or a single grant paid "once for all." If the estimate we have given is correct, once the present accumulation of repairs is put right, the maintenance of our churches in good repair may require about £750,000 a year at the present level of costs. This will call for a redistribution of monies between parishes, and continued help from generous bodies, but it ought to be within the means of the Church, at any rate if the forms of relief that we propose later are obtained. We do not think, therefore, that the necessity for an annual Exchequer grant will arise. But the question of an application for a grant from the Exchequer to meet the present accumulation of repairs needs more careful consideration. (Such a grant might in fact be paid in a series of yearly instalments for a term of years, but in principle it would still be a single grant.)

In applying for such a grant it could be argued that the present emergency has arisen largely as a result of the demands of the State. The Church well understands that in the struggle for national existence and in the economic situation immediately following the war the State was obliged severely to restrict building licences. This compulsory postponement of repair may not matter greatly for a recent building. But ancient churches, as already pointed out, deteriorate rapidly unless attended to frequently, and the deterioration is progressive. It was not the fault of the Church that so few repairs could be made in the ten years following 1939. It would therefore be wholly just that the State should be willing to make a substantial contribution to remedying the consequences.

It could be argued on the other side that although the Church was prevented from carrying out substantial repairs from 1939 onwards she was not prevented from accumulating the money needed for that problem; and to this it can in turn be replied that parochial church councils did, in fact, make such provision. It has already been noted that the £1,500,000 spent on fabrics in 1950 was not all raised in that year; it includes sums set aside in previous years. These sums have proved insufficient to meet the need, but for this parochial church councils are not entirely to blame. They could not have foreseen that ten years would elapse before repairs could be undertaken, and the cost of putting right ten years of enforced postponement is far greater than the cost of meeting needed repairs year by year; nor could parochial church councils have been expected to foresee that money they set aside for repairs would be so drastically reduced in value by the time it could be used. They could hardly have been expected to show greater acumen than businesses, which have been given various forms of relief in meeting the related problem of depreciation of plant.

There would, therefore, be nothing strange in a request for an

Exchequer grant, and it may be argued that there is a precedent in the acceptance by the Church of payments for war damage to ecclesiastical buildings. Along with other charitable bodies, the Churches have qualified under Section 69 of the War Damage Act, 1943, for payments to repair war damage and to rebuild totally-destroyed churches even though they were not required to contribute to the insurance scheme. One reason, of course, why this provision met with no opposition is that it applies equally to all religious bodies, and as the enemy's bombs fell indiscriminately all denominations have, in fact, benefited.

Apart from war damage, we are not aware of any cases where help from the public funds has been given for the repair of churches. There have been several cases where monies from the public funds have been used for the building of new churches. After the great fire of London the cost of Wren's rebuilt churches was met by means of a tax on coal. In 1712, thanks to the personal influence of Queen Anne, an Act was passed for the building in the London area of fifty churches out of the proceeds of a tax on certain articles imported into the port of London. Owing to the high architectural standards set the proceeds sufficed for the building of only eleven churches. In 1818 the New Churches Act was passed by Parliament to remedy (in the words of the Lords Commissioners on 27 January 1818) "the deficiency which has so long existed in the number of places of public worship belonging to the established Church when compared with the increased and increasing population of the country." The first section authorized the appropriation of £1,000,000 for the purpose, the eighth provided for the appointment of commissioners and in the light of the experience of Queen Anne's Act the sixty-second empowered the commissioners to build churches or chapels "upon such plans as they shall deem most expedient for the affording fit and proper accommodation for the largest number of persons at the least expense."

These cases are cognate, but they are not strictly pertinent to the present need, as the grants were used for the provision of new churches or an entire rebuilding, neither of which is now proposed. For the other reasons given, however, it would not be improper or a sacrifice of principle if the Church were to make a request for an Exchequer grant to make good the accumulated repairs of a decade; and if such a grant were obtained it would have obvious practical advantages. It would enable a planned programme of repairs to be started at once before further deterioration sets in. If it could be obtained, this would undoubtedly be the easiest course before the Church. But the easiest course is not necessarily the right one. Quite apart from the dangers of dependence on State

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aid of which history affords many examples, there is today a too prevalent tendency to look to the State to solve all the problems of life, individual and corporate. The Church should set an example in trying to manage her own affairs without recourse to the State.

It may be, as some people think, that an approach for a State grant will prove unavoidable. In that case we should with varying degrees of reluctance recommend that an application be made; and we have tried to avoid saying anything that would prejudice such an approach if it has to be made at a later stage. But we think that it should first be shown to be unavoidable, and it can be shown to be unavoidable only if the Church first makes the effort to raise the money by an appeal to her own people and to the community at large. For the Church to raise £4,000,000 in a period of ten years is admittedly a formidable task, but it is not impossible. It could be done if every family in England would give just one shilling a year for ten years. We should have no hesitation in saying that the Church could accomplish this task if it were not for the fact that she is simultaneously forced to make many other appeals of a most pressing nature. For these reasons we do not recommend that an approach be made now for an Exchequer grant, but we cannot rule out the possibility that it may have to be made later. We suspect that this attitude will also be more welcome to the State than an immediate application for an Exchequer grant. It must not be assumed that an application has only to be made to be successful. It is a common delusion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a bottomless purse, and if an application has eventually to be made we believe it will stand more chance of success if the Church has first made every effort herself. Since the war the Church has done much to raise funds for repairs, but the gravity of the present position has not yet been brought before Churchpeople and before the community at large, as we are now seeking to bring it.

As we are not recommending an application for an Exchequer grant, we do not feel it incumbent upon us to inquire into the question whether conditions of an unacceptable nature might be attached to such a grant. This is a matter that has roused much discussion, but it is hypothetical and is best left to be answered if it should arise. We may, however, legitimately point out that the Exchequer grants made to the University Grants Committee and the Arts Council are made without conditions. The system works satisfactorily, and if the question ever arises we hope that any Exchequer grant made for the repair of churches would also be unconditional.

(v) An Exchequer Loan?

A related form of public aid is a loan from the Exchequer, either free of interest or at a low rate. Though conditions are attached to loans as often as to grants, some Churchpeople would have less diffidence about making an application for a loan. The loans made to the managers or governors of an aided school or special agreement school under Section 105 of the Education Act, 1944, may be regarded as affording some degree of precedent. There, are, however, other Churchpeople who would shrink from the responsibility of meeting the service of a State loan, and on the State side it is quite possible that, as no tangible security can be offered, the authorities would prefer, if help has to be given from the Exchequer, to give it in the form of an outright grant. We do not therefore recommend that an approach be made now for a State loan, but the possibility should be borne in mind if the Church's own effort fails to achieve complete success.

It is also worth bearing in mind that individuals who cannot make large outright gifts may be prepared to make substantial loans free of interest or at a low rate on the bare promise of the Church authorities to repay them or their heirs either after a stipulated period or within a reasonable time after demand, or whenever possible.

(vi) Easement in Taxation

If the Church refrains from asking for a grant or loan from the Exchequer she is entitled to all the more consideration if she asks, as we strongly consider that she is entitled to ask, for some easement in the burden of taxation. Despite the smaller attendances at Church services, Churchpeople would today be able and willing to carry the whole burden of maintaining our church fabrics if it were not for the sustained crushing level of taxation, and for changes in the law of taxation affecting those who in the past have been generous benefactors of the Church. We do not question that the financial needs of the State will remain high for many years to come, and Churchpeople have no desire to avoid their personal obligations as citizens. But we are bound to point out the grievous effects which this sustained high rate of taxation is having on the religious life of the nation, and no doubt on the whole of its cultural life. It is small consolation to think that when taxation drives out the private benefactor the State may be ready to help with a grant; we are grateful for being picked up when we are knocked down, but we prefer not to be knocked down. From its own point of view the State needs to watch very carefully lest the high rate of taxation

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should crush voluntary effort, for the voluntary societies, among which the Church is pre-eminent, provide the moral support needed to sustain the work of the State in creating the fabric of a good life. Taxation weighs most heavily on those who in the past have given the largest financial support to the religious life of the nation; and although, as we have earlier said, the Church must try to draw greater support from a wider number, the process will take time, and the problem of church fabrics is urgent. There is no need to wait until a substantial reduction in the general level of taxation becomes possible. It has long been a canon of British financial policy that certain types of gifts for charitable purposes shall enjoy relief from taxation. What is needed is to apply this principle. Two reforms in the law are particularly needed.

(a) It is even now the case that where a subscriber enters into a covenant to pay so much a year for charitable purposes for seven years the charity is able to recover the amount of income tax that he has paid on that portion of his income given to the charity in any year. He gets no personal benefit, but the benefit to the charity is substantial, amounting at the present time in the case of all subscribers paying the full standard rate on any part of their income to 9s. 6d. for every half guinea contribution. We value this relief, and urge that the fullest possible use should be made of it in the campaign that we envisage; that is one reason why we have suggested a period of over seven years. But in the case of deeds executed since 10 April 1946 there has been no relief in respect of surtax, and the withdrawal has hit all charities. Until that date a taxpayer was able to deduct from his income for the computation of surtax any contribution paid to a charity under a deed of covenant. This meant that he was able to give far more substantial sums to charity than is possible now that he has to pay surtax on them. We emphasise that his personal position has remained unchanged; it is the charity which has suffered and the Exchequer which has benefited. At the present time a person liable to the highest rate of surtax who wishes to give £1 to a charity without a deed of covenant cannot do so without simultaneously paying £39 to the Exchequer. If he enters into a deed of covenant, out of this same slice of £40 of his income the charity gets £20, the Exchequer gets £20 and he gets nothing. We have avoided presenting the case in such a manner as to arouse prejudice. These are bald arithmetical facts. We cannot feel that the position is just or in the interests of the nation, and we strongly urge that the *status quo ante* should be restored. If the Exchequer feels that it cannot now face the loss of revenue which a general restoration might involve, we urge that it should at any rate be made in respect of covenants made for the maintenance of church fabrics. There is ample precedent for making

concessions of this character where a special case is proved.¹ We cannot believe that the number of millionaires rushing to make covenants for the benefits of church fabrics would be such as to embarrass the revenue; but if this result should come about, as soon as the present emergency is overcome let the Government of the day review the position. Alternately, if a complete restoration of the pre-1946 position is ruled out, we suggest a remission of surtax up to a certain limit, say 5s. 6d. in the £. In the United States a person is allowed to give to charities 15 per cent. of his annual income tax free; in Canada an individual is allowed to give 10 per cent. of his annual income tax free.

(b) The second reform is needed in the law relating to death duties. In the House of Commons on 19 June 1951 the following new clause proposed to be added to the Finance Bill was moved by Captain Crookshank: "Any money given or bequeathed wholly for the repair or reconstruction of places of worship of any denomination shall be exempt from death duties."² The Chancellor of the Exchequer, then Mr. Gaitskell, felt obliged to resist the new clause in the words: "I do not think it easy for us to single out the repair and reconstruction of churches as a particular charitable object. There are many other worthy causes, and I do not see how one can draw the line."³ He distinguished between the relief which was sought for churches and the relief which had been given earlier in the committee to historic houses.⁴ But he concluded: "I appreciate the purpose of the right hon. and gallant Gentleman in raising this matter. We all feel that this is a worthy cause and I am prepared, where there is evidence of serious difficulty, to see whether there is any way in which we would be justified as a community, and as the Government representing the community, in doing something to help. Naturally, I cannot be held to make any promises here. I would say only that I will look into the matter and see how much evidence there is of serious decay, and of churches falling to pieces which ought not to be allowed to go to pieces, and see if there is anything which can be done."⁵ On a division the clause was lost by 278 votes to 287. We hope that the clause will be reintroduced and passed in the present Parliament. We do not rely on the change which has taken place in the composition of the House since the debate, for it would be undesirable for the Church to receive at the

¹ For example, at the same time that the Chancellor of the day announced the amendment of the law with regard to covenanted subscriptions he announced a special concession whereby income tax relief was given in respect of capital contributions to technical colleges. (*Hansard*, House of Commons, 9 April 1946, Vol. 421, cols. 1826-27.)

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hands of one party a relief resisted by another. We rely rather on the justice of the case, knowing that a Chancellor of the Exchequer must usually resist new proposals for tax reliefs and recognizing the sincerity of Mr. Gaitskell's desire to help the Church. To his main objection we reply that the repair of churches *can* be singled out as a particular charitable object deserving relief. The parish churches of England are the chief part of our architectural heritage, and many of them are in a state of serious decay. There is no way in which their loss could be made good, and they cannot wait until the demands on the Exchequer are less pressing. As for Mr. Gaitskell's reminder that gifts for the repair of churches made more than a year before the death of the donor qualify for exemption from death duties,¹ this deserves to be more widely known, but it hardly meets the point. There are many people unable to give capital to a church in their lifetime (because they need the interest on it) who are prepared to leave it in their will; and if they choose this second course (incidentally giving the Exchequer the benefit of income tax during the remainder of their lives) it is hard that it should be taxed.

A further desirable reform, with regard to gifts by businesses for Church purposes, requires no change in the law but only in administrative practice. It is even today the case, as with personal subscriptions, that when a company enters into a seven-year covenant to pay so much a year for charitable purposes the charity is able to recover the income tax paid by the company. The only taxes ultimately borne by the charitable gift are those on excess and undistributed profits. We hope that more companies will enter into such covenants for the maintenance of their local church fabrics, which nearly double the value of their contributions. This is particularly desirable as we wish to encourage regular contributions to a local church fabric fund in place of sporadic giving as the need arises. But for various reasons, of which uncertainty with regard to the future is the chief, many companies which would gladly contribute to local church funds as they are able are reluctant to enter into covenants for so long a period as seven years. In their cases it makes a big difference to the charity whether such contributions are allowable as business expenses or not in the computation of the company's profits for the purpose of taxation. In former days such contributions were common, and in the days when income tax was low and profits taxes did not exist no one bothered very much whether they could or could not be deducted before profits were struck. But it is a different matter with taxation at its present level. In order to give £50 for the repair of the fabric of its local church, if it is not allowed as a business expense, a company

¹ *Loc. cit.*, cols. 305-6.

must earn a minimum of £100, of which £50 is taken by the revenue (£2 10s. in profits tax and £47 10s. in income tax); and it needs to earn more if it is liable to excess profits levy. In former days good employers regarded themselves as having a duty to make a financial contribution to the life of the community around them, and we cannot but regret the passing of this tradition. The question whether a payment is properly allowable as a business expense clearly cannot be defined by statute but must be left to the good sense of inspectors, working under general directions from the Board of Inland Revenue. We ask that a rather more generous attitude should be taken to contributions for local church purposes. There are cases where small contributions for Church purposes are allowed, but so far as we can judge from the cases known to us the Church does not rank so high for this purpose as hospitals and infirmaries, holiday homes, the Boy Scouts and other good causes. We should be prepared to argue strongly that the promotion of religion and morality in a district is in the interest of good production in that district, and that reasonable contributions to the maintenance of religion should therefore be allowed as business expenses.

In particular we cannot help feeling that the public corporations which have come into existence in recent years might set a better example. We are not, of course, concerned with the merits of the change from private to public ownership but only with the decline in the practice of contributing to local church funds. The subscriptions paid by the former owners were mainly for the "living agent," but we should like to see established the principle that the public corporations, as good employers, should contribute to the maintenance of the fabrics of churches with which they have local connexions. We do not suggest that they should do more than a good private employer would do, but only that they should accept the same standards. It is not disputed that the public corporations have power to do what is suggested, and in some cases they are still doing it; at the least it can be justified as good public relations. We have every reason to believe that the present administrators of the public corporations wish to be generous in charitable causes, but as the custodians of public property they need to be assured of public support; for ourselves we do not believe that contributions they might make for the maintenance of church fabrics with which they have close associations would come under criticism either in Parliament or outside.

(vii) Local Government Help

Public aid in the maintenance of church fabrics could come through local authorities no less than from the State, and in many ways does not raise the same difficulties. The centralization of power

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in the hands of the State is one of the most marked developments of modern times, and it is widely feared that the receipt of direct help from the State for Church purposes would strengthen this tendency. There could be no such objection to help from local authorities. If a local authority tried to assert a right of control over a church in view of a contribution made to the upkeep of its fabric, the fact that its members and officials live in the neighbourhood could make life difficult for the incumbent, but in such cases help would probably not be sought or at any rate not sought again. Clearly a local authority could contribute to the fabric of a church only where such a contribution would not incur strong public criticism, and there are many cases where such help would not be possible. But there are also many cases where the local corporation has special associations with one church. The mayor and corporation or chairman and council attend in state at the opening of each session and on special occasions. It is looked upon as "the town church." In such instances it would be wholly fitting that the local authority should make a regular contribution to the upkeep of the fabric.

We are advised by Professor William A. Robson, barrister-at-law and Professor of Local Government Administration in the University of London, that the legal position of local authorities in this respect is as follows:

"There is no statutory power enabling them to spend their funds on the repair of churches, and until recently it was the accepted doctrine that local authorities could only spend rate funds on objects authorized by statute. The case of *Attorney-General v. Leicester Corporation* (1943) Ch. 86 has modified the position as regards borough councils. In that case it was held that borough councils may now expend the general rate fund on objects not authorized by statute—thus restoring a position they enjoyed (and often abused) in the days before 1835. The situation is, therefore, that borough councils can spend money on repair of church fabrics but other classes of local authorities (parish councils, urban or rural districts, and county councils) have no such power. (At common law municipal corporations have always had greater power than statutory authorities.)"

This power of borough councils should be made more widely known, and in suitable cases, that is to say where there is a special connexion between a corporation and a church and public opinion would not oppose, incumbents should approach the corporation for a regular contribution. In the case of other local authorities, it would seem desirable for Parliament to give them the powers enjoyed in this respect by borough councils.

In this connexion it may be worth pointing out that under the

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Local Government Act, 1948, Section 132, local authorities are authorized to provide, or to contribute to the expenses of providing, "entertainment of any nature or of facilities for dancing," a theatre, concert hall or other premises suitable for entertainments, the maintenance of a band or orchestra, and so on. Much good music has been provided under this power, not always without opposition from a section of the ratepayers, and there would seem to be a case for empowering all local authorities to contribute in a similar way to the upkeep of their local architectural heritage.

(B) OTHER FORMS OF HELP

(i) *Adoption of Churches*

It was a familiar practice in the Middle Ages for guilds to make themselves responsible for the repair of the whole or part of a church, and the "adoption" of churches by bodies willing to accept the financial responsibility for their maintenance, in whole or part, would be a useful contribution to the present problem.

The Chapter House of Westminster Abbey is maintained at the present time by the Ministry of Works. The historical reason is that the House of Commons met in the Chapter House from the thirteenth century to 1547, and the Crown has continued to accept responsibility for the state of the building. The Crown also maintains the Pyx Chamber in Westminster Abbey, which was used as a treasury by the monastery and for a long period was used by the Crown for a like purpose. These are not exact parallels for what is envisaged in the term "adoption of churches," inasmuch as the Chapter House and Pyx Chamber are not now regularly used for religious purposes, and the Crown acts as though it were the legal owner. In an adopted church the present legal responsibility for the maintenance of its fabric would rest unchanged. Nevertheless, the Chapter House and Pyx Chamber are integral parts of the Abbey buildings, and they suggest that there might be many cases where bodies having a close connection, historical or otherwise, with a church might be willing to make themselves financially responsible for keeping the whole or part of it in good repair. Not only would the financial help be appreciated, but the intimate link created between the body and the Church would have spiritual value.

As an example of what we mean, we were delighted to read the following paragraph in *The Journal*, the organ of the Institute of Journalists, for September-October 1951, p. 128.

"Many of the leading newspaper personalities, both proprietorial and editorial, have assured Mr. Armitage [the vicar

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The Chapter House of Westminster Abbey is maintained at the present time by the Ministry of Works. The historical reason is that the House of Commons met in the Chapter House from the thirteenth century to 1547, and the Crown has continued to accept responsibility for the state of the building. The Crown also maintains the Pyx Chamber in Westminster Abbey, which was used as a treasury by the monastery and for a long period was used by the Crown for a like purpose. These are not exact parallels for what is envisaged in the term "adoption of churches," inasmuch as the Chapter House and Pyx Chamber are not now regularly used for religious purposes, and the Crown acts as though it were the legal owner. In an adopted church the present legal responsibility for the maintenance of its fabric would rest unchanged. Nevertheless, the Chapter House and Pyx Chamber are integral parts of the Abbey buildings, and they suggest that there might be many cases where bodies having a close connection, historical or otherwise, with a church might be willing to make themselves financially responsible for keeping the whole or part of it in good repair. Not only would the financial help be appreciated, but the intimate link created between the body and the Church would have spiritual value.

As an example of what we mean, we were delighted to read the following paragraph in *The Journal*, the organ of the Institute of Journalists, for September-October 1951, p. 128.

"Many of the leading newspaper personalities, both proprietorial and editorial, have assured Mr. Armitage [the vicar

of St. Bride's, Fleet Street] that the Press can and will produce the funds, considerable though the amount must be, to restore St. Bride for another eight centuries of service. In the belief that the Press, with or without the parish, will rally to the task, the new 'Vicar of Fleet Street' and his colleagues are proceeding energetically with the plans for an appeal."

Since these words were written, newspaper proprietors and journalists have made them good by setting about the raising of a fund of no less than £210,000. There must be other professional bodies and institutions who would be willing to assume a like responsibility towards churches with which they have a special connexion. We refrain from suggesting particular cases—it is best that they should come from the bodies themselves—but there are several in London that leap to the mind, and here the problem is particularly acute owing to the movement of people away from the parishes of central London in the course of centuries. This would fit in particularly well with the new scheme for Guild churches in the City.

The suggestion already made that local authorities might in appropriate cases make themselves responsible for repairs to the fabric would be another example of adoption.

(ii) Charitable Trusts

Many parishes have funds bequeathed a long time ago for the relief of poor parishioners. In Appendix III the parochial charities of St. Peter's with St. Owen, Hereford, are given as an example. In many cases, owing to changed conditions after the lapse of years, it is not possible to carry out the donor's intentions. The law in such cases is that when a testator indicates a general intention of charity, but the particular charitable object he has in mind cannot be carried out literally, it must be carried into effect as nearly as possible. This is known as the *cy-près* doctrine, and governs the actions of the Charity Commissioners in authorizing variations of charitable trusts. We regard it as of primary importance that the intentions of charitable donors should be executed, and that to meet cases where they cannot be executed the *cy-près* principle is well founded. But it must be admitted that in these days, when provision is made by compulsory insurance for meeting all the contingencies of life, the situation contemplated by the founders no longer exists and it often becomes anomalous or impossible to carry out their wishes in the strict sense, and difficult to carry out their intentions in any near sense. In these circumstances it is worth considering whether power could not be given to authorize the use of these trust monies for the upkeep of the fabric of the parish church. In many cases the parish church is the one remaining

centre of parish life left from the days of the founders, and the maintenance of its fabric is a charitable use for which a strong case can be made. The subject bristles with legal complexities, which are even now being examined by the Committee on the Law and Practice relating to Charitable Trusts, and we urge that this possibility should be kept in mind. The sum held in trust by the various charities is not usually large, but *in toto* they are considerable, and if they could be applied to the maintenance of the fabric they would provide a sensible easing of this problem.

(iii) Church Collections

In past years the collections given in churches have been generously given to a great variety of good causes. Many millions of pounds have been given to outside charities in this way. In the financial position in which the Church finds herself today it is necessary to consider whether such collections ought not to be more used for Church purposes. In many cases the collections on certain Sundays are still given to particular charitable objects though the need has now greatly diminished. Collections for hospitals since they have been taken over by the National Health Service are a case in point. We urge churches to reconsider the allocation of collections in the light of changed circumstances and of their own needs, and in particular we suggest that the collections taken at Harvest Festivals might be put into the Repair and Restoration Fund. These are occasions when there are present many people who do not frequently come to church, and to use the collections as we have suggested is a means of ensuring that they make some contribution to the upkeep of their church.

(iv) Church Rates

In former days the expenses of maintaining the fabric of a parish church, along with the expenses of carrying on divine service and paying the salaries of parochial officials, were normally met out of the Church rate levied in each parish. The Church rate was made by the churchwardens together with the parishioners duly assembled in the vestry or the church after proper notice. The rates thus made could be recovered in the ecclesiastical court, or if the arrears did not exceed £10 and no questions were raised as to the legal liability, before two justices of the peace.

It became increasingly difficult to collect the Church rate owing to the objections of Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, and since the passing of the Compulsory Church Rate Abolition Act, 1868, Church rates are no longer compulsory on the persons rated. Church rates can, however, still be fixed, though the payment of

them is entirely voluntary. There could be no question of reverting to a compulsory Church rate levied on all occupiers of land or houses in a parish, but it is for consideration whether more use should not be made of voluntary Church rates for the maintenance of fabrics. The levying of such a rate would, in fact, be an appeal, but it might be the most suitable form of appeal, if an accompanying notice set out the needs and explained the legal basis of a voluntary Church rate, for reaching people who do not frequently attend church. It would, in effect, be an appeal along these lines : "Your parish church needs so much for repairs this year. The rateable value of your house or land suggests that you ought to pay so much. Will you do so?"

(v) Ecclesiastical Insurance Office

The possibility of creating an insurance scheme to meet the costs of extraordinary repairs has been considered, but it does not appear to be feasible; the uncertainties are too great and the premiums that would need to be charged are too high.

There are, however, great merits in a scheme put out by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office for the accumulation of annual savings to form the nucleus of a Repair and Restoration Fund. We shall later recommend that every parish should have such a fund, and the scheme is an excellent way of creating it. The fundamental idea of the plan is the accumulation of a fixed annual payment to produce a capital sum at the end of some considerable number of years. For example, an annual payment of £18 3s. 4d. made every year for a period of 40 years will produce the sum of £1,000 at the end of the 40 years. It would be possible, of course, for churchwardens to achieve similar results by investing a fixed annual sum in Savings Certificates, but it requires a certain strength of mind to make this regular annual provision, and there are advantages in having a regular premium to find by a fixed date each year.

We believe that archdeacons have not failed to impress on parochial authorities the need to increase their premiums for insurance against fire and other insurable risks such as storm, impact from aircraft and third party (public liability) risks in order to meet rising costs. We can only reinforce their advice, and every increase in the volume of insurance effected leads to tangible benefits to the Church inasmuch as the surplus funds of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office are allocated to Church purposes. In the year ending on 28 February 1952 a sum of £42,000 was distributed in this way, bringing the total distributed since the company began operations in 1887 to £1,432,480.

The distribution of the £42,000 in 1951-52 was as follows :

£24,491 to the Church of England Pensions Board, £14,695 to be divided among the English dioceses, and £2,814 to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales. These are all good causes, and the recipients would no doubt be loth to see any reduction in the sums they receive from the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office. But the surplus funds of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office are made largely by the insurance of church fabrics, and there is no more appropriate use for them than the maintenance of fabrics. In view of the expectations which have been created, we do not suggest a diminution in the grants now made by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office, but we should like to be able to suggest to the directors that they should be stabilized, and that any increase in the surplus should be used for the repair of church fabrics. In view of the need to increase premiums which we have emphasized and the desirability of building up restoration funds by annual premiums, we hope that these surplus funds will continue to increase, though we realize that the directors must follow a cautious policy and make an increase in their grants only when it can be sustained.

On making inquiries of the directors, whom we have found most sympathetic towards our aims, we have discovered that there are difficulties in the way of so doing. Under existing agreements with a long period still to run five-eighths of any increase in the surplus funds must go to the Pensions Board and a certain proportion commensurate with the business done in the principality must also go to the Church in Wales. Moreover, the allocations made to the individual dioceses are in proportion to the business done in them, and the directors quite properly set store by this principle. It would, of course, be open to the diocesan authorities to use their allocations wholly or in part for the repair of churches, and as the insurance of church fabrics is the main source of the surplus funds we urge that this should be done to the fullest possible extent; and although the directors are at this moment precluded from using any increase in the surplus funds in the manner we should like to see, we nevertheless trust that they will be able to find some way in the future of making a direct contribution to the cause of church repairs, which we know they have very much at heart.

(vi) Charges for Occasional Offices

One of the problems of the age is how to attract money for the support of the Church from those who, though well disposed, resort to her only for such occasions as baptism, marriage and burial. Though fees are normally received by the minister after the marriage and burial services, they are very small and nothing is

paid for the use of the church. It is arguable whether there should not be a scale of charges and, if so, the church fabric fund would seem the most appropriate destination. There are arguments, of course, against so doing, particularly in the case of baptism, but if a social consciousness were built up in these matters, many people would give voluntarily and generously. Most people who come only to the occasional services take the Church for granted; they have inherited a belief that the Church is a wealthy corporation and do not realize that the Church has, in fact, virtually no endowments for the maintenance of fabrics. Today it is anomalous that nothing should be paid for the use of a church for a wedding at which the flowers and the champagne may cost as much as would keep the church in good repair for a year. Even if the idea of a statutory charge is ruled out, the practice of providing a plate for the church funds as the congregation leaves a marriage service needs to be encouraged, and experience suggests that wedding guests do not disapprove and, being in a genial frame of mind, often contribute generously. No one likes to raise the question of money in connexion with burial, but at too many funerals money is spent lavishly on everything except the church in which the service takes place; and it must be remembered that almost every member of the population is now compulsorily insured for a death grant of £20 designed to pay his funeral expenses. If we do not make any more definite recommendations under this heading it is because the possibility of deriving an income from the occasional offices is one of Church finance generally, in which the fabrics would benefit only along with other Church needs; we commend the subject to the attention of the Church authorities.

(vii) An Appeal Overseas

Though an oversea appeal cannot be organized in the same systematic way as an appeal to our own people, it should not be overlooked that the parish churches of England awaken affection far beyond the confines of this country, and there must be many people, especially in the British realms beyond the seas and in the United States of America who would be willing to make their contribution when the need is made known to them. Many of our parishes are already in the debt of visitors from the oversea territories of the Commonwealth and from the United States.

(viii) The Main Need — Appeal for £4,000,000

The object of this part of our report has been to consider ways in which the money needed to put our churches into good repair, and thereafter to keep them in good repair, can be raised. In the course of our examination we have been led to make a

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number of recommendations of varying degrees of importance, and in order to ensure that our suggestions are kept in proper perspective we emphasize that the outstanding need, in our view, is that a sum of £4,000,000 should be raised within the next ten years to supplement the efforts of parishes in overtaking the accumulation of repairs since 1939. We believe that a country-wide organization should be set up to raise this sum, and only if the appeal fails should the direct aid of the State be invoked. We proceed to consider the best form of organization to ensure that the appeal does not fail.

(C) ORGANIZATION

The raising of so large a sum as £4,000,000 and its wise distribution, even when spread over a period of ten years, calls for a sustained effort and a nation-wide organization. A national appeal supported by the highest patronage will no doubt have a place in it, but the Church can no longer rely on the large gifts of a few people. The amount of surplus wealth in the hands of individuals is not less than it used to be, but it is now more widely distributed. To attract contributions from persons who have not hitherto felt any compelling obligation to pay for the upkeep of church fabrics requires a network spread throughout the whole country. Though the problem of maintaining our churches in good repair thereafter will not be so formidable, it will require the raising and effective distribution of substantial sums of money annually, and the same type of organization will be necessary, though the staff can be smaller.

In considering the right type of organization we have to bear in mind two factors pulling in opposite directions :

(a) The claims on Churchpeople in the future are going to be heavy, and the proper maintenance of fabrics will be only one of many competing claims, among which adequate stipends for the clergy are pre-eminent. This calls for nothing short of a revolution in the financing of the Church. We have no authority to make general recommendations on this subject, but we have been brought up against it at every turn of our investigations, and it has inhibited us from making any suggestions for a special organization in the parishes to raise money for fabrics. We shall content ourselves with making in their proper place only a few suggestions strictly within our terms of reference.

(b) There are, however, many people who see no obligation to contribute to the training and maintenance of the ministry, clergy pensions, the maintenance of services and missions but who feel an

affection for the places in which they were baptized and married and expect to be buried, and who would be willing to contribute to the upkeep of their fabrics; and there are yet others who value our parish churches as constituting the greater part of our historic and architectural heritage and who would be willing to help in the cost of its preservation. It must also be borne in mind that many people will make a gift for a particular church but not for churches in general, and therefore even in the cases of monies intended to be centrally distributed provision must be made for them to be allocated for a particular church or the churches in a particular area.

These considerations suggest a two-fold organization based on the realm and the county.

(i) Historic Churches Preservation Trust

We recommend that there should be a body, for which the name "The Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches" is suggested, to create the county organization and to make a national appeal. The trustees would be unpaid and should be persons of high standing and ability appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It would be essential for the names of the trustees to create confidence both among the general public and among those bodies specially interested in the preservation of our churches. The chairmanship and composition can be safely left to the Archbishops.

The trust would need a full-time paid secretary as its chief official and a paid staff under him.

One of the first tasks of the trustees would be to launch a national appeal for funds. This would be directed especially to institutions which could more suitably contribute to a national appeal than to a parochial or county fund, and also to individuals who prefer to make their contributions in that form. It may be expected that such an appeal would receive the highest patronage and might be launched with traditional authority and with the full help of the Press and, we should hope, of the B.B.C. and the cinemas. Though the advantage of leaving the Trust free to use contributions where they are most needed would be emphasized, it would be made clear that contributors could, if they so desired, appropriate their gifts in whole or part for particular churches or the churches in a particular diocese or other area.

The details of launching the national appeal must necessarily be left to the trustees. There is one specially important matter which will need to be considered by them. It is whether the national appeal should be made to cover all churches, or restricted to ancient churches, or at any rate the older churches. It would clearly be

easier to make a wide national appeal for churches that had a claim to historical and architectural importance, and from the point of view of the Church every easing of the burden of maintaining buildings of acknowledged merit would *pro tanto* make easier the responsibility of putting the modern churches in good repair. Similar arguments hold good for appeals made by any area organization, to which we now turn.

(ii) County Trusts

To ensure that no source of funds is overlooked the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches will need not only to launch a national appeal but to work through an area organization. The county, rather than the diocese is favoured as the unit of area organization because it is more suitable for attracting those who are not habitual churchgoers but are well-disposed towards the cause of church fabrics. Many bodies which might contribute are already organized on a county basis, and to the individuals we have in mind the county means more than the diocese. It may be hoped that for such a cause the Lord Lieutenant would generally give a lead and that he would receive the support of the Lord Mayors, Mayors and chairmen of councils in his county. They, with other suitable persons approved by the national body, would be its counterpart in the county and for them the name "The Trust for the Preservation of —shire Churches" is suggested. They might need a full-time organizer with an office and secretary, though the smaller counties might be grouped with large neighbours for this purpose. It would be his duty, under the guidance of the county trust, to solicit and transmit contributions from persons and bodies who might be more disposed to give to an area than to a parochial organization. Local patriotism being strong and praiseworthy, it would be made clear that contributions could be earmarked, if desired, for the churches in the county as a whole or for any particular church therein. Otherwise monies raised would be placed at the disposal of the national body for use in its discretion. It is to be hoped that the county organizers would not restrict themselves to conventional forms of appeal.

(iii) Parish Repair and Restoration Fund

No central organization, however good, can take the place of the parish. As the Pilgrim Trust says in evidence, "The best friends of every parish church are its own parishioners," and care must be taken "lest, in a great national campaign, the local patriotism of the individual should be swamped."

For the reasons already stated we refrain from carrying this proposed new organization down to the parish or county district.

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By the time this level is reached most potential contributors who do not habitually attend church will have been reached by the county organizers, and the contributions of those who are regular worshippers will need to be measured against many other claims. There are, however, certain suggestions with regard to parochial organization that we wish to make.

Every parish should have its Church Repair and Restoration Fund distinct from all other accounts for the upkeep of its church or churches. The Society of Antiquaries would make it "obligatory for all parishes to contribute yearly towards an inspection fund and a fabric fund," but it is probably not necessary to promote a Measure to this end. The good sense of incumbents, churchwardens and parochial church councils, stimulated where necessary by their archdeacons, should be able to secure this result, which we emphasize is desirable for all churches and not simply ancient churches.

We have not attempted to find out how many parishes in England as a whole already possess such separate Repair and Restoration Funds, but one of our number has been able to give us the results of an inquiry he has made among the incumbents of the diocese of Lincoln. He has received answers from 208 clergymen, representing 277 parishes, or about half the diocese and typical of the whole. Of the parishes covered by these replies, 146 have some repair fund and 104 have not. The total of the funds held by the 146 parishes is £65,094, of which £7,188 is with the Diocesan Trust; and in addition it is known that there is in the Diocesan Trust another £30,000 held on behalf of 81 churches which did not send in a reply—probably because they knew the answer was already known to the diocesan authorities. This is an average of over £400 a parish, and if this is typical of England as a whole it is encouraging. It would perhaps be unwise to assume that it is typical, but in any case much more can, and ought to, be done in the building up of Repair and Restoration Funds.

There should be in every church, as there often is today, a box with a prominent notice inviting the gifts of visitors in compelling terms; this is elementary, but cases have come to our notice where the frustrated visitor sees the notice but cannot find the box. The Repair and Restoration Fund should be regularly replenished by collections in church and by social activities. It has been found a judicious course to place in the church a board with the names of benefactors who have given, say, £100 or more to the Repair and Restoration Fund; there is no reason why such a benefactors' board should be out of keeping—it can embellish the church. The advantages of building up such a fund by taking out a policy with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office should be brought to the notice of the parochial authorities. In the present state of things most parishes

will need to spend on repairs all that they raise, but some of the more fortunate will, we hope, be able to make contributions to the county or the national fund. There will be some which will be able to built up endowments which will provide sufficient income to maintain the fabric. This may now seem no more than a pious hope, but at the current rate of interest an endowment of only £1,250 would provide sufficient income in perpetuity to keep the average church in repair if the estimate of £50 a year which we have given is correct. We have been informed of one Midland industrial parish with a splendid ancient church which, by sedulously treating all legacies as capital, has built up a Repair and Restoration Fund producing £100 a year—and in addition it is raising more than £300 a year for the same purpose by parish activities. (The needs of this fine church are particularly exacting.)

In the case of famous churches known and loved far beyond their own parish the method of forming a society of Friends of — Church, on the analogy of the bodies formed to support so many cathedrals, has yielded useful results, and we commend it in suitable cases.

We commend also a suggestion made to us that those who desire to commemorate in church a relative or friend could often appropriately do so by undertaking to bear the cost of some needed piece of restoration. There could not, in these days, be a more suitable form of memorial, and if it is desired to record the names of the persons commemorated and the donors it is usually possible to find means in which this can be effectively and unobtrusively done.

At this point we feel it incumbent upon us to urge parishes to put first things first. A time when the fabric is in danger of falling down is no time to consider embellishments or ornaments that, however desirable in themselves, can only divert resources from the prime need. There is, for example, a tendency in many parishes to insist on elaborate and costly organs, out of all proportion to the size and needs of the building, at a time when the fabric is calling for attention. We ask only for a sense of proportion to be kept.

(iv) Need for Businesslike Approach

It is inevitable that the State and county organization sketched above should cost money, even though we anticipate that for such a cause many helpers will give their services freely and gladly. The administrative expenses cannot be expected to be less than 5 per cent. and should not be allowed to exceed 10 per cent. of the sums raised. But this is an outlay that must be faced as a business proposition; and the problem of raising this large sum of £4,000,000 can be solved if it is tackled on business-like lines.

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The Church must find means of making her needs appreciated in the twentieth century as she has done in every previous age; and in the words of evidence submitted to us by the Pilgrim Trust,

“the authorities of the Church might be well advised to seek the advice of those who have made a professional study of methods of publicity to help them to prepare and present their claim for support to these new sections of the community from whom it is imperative that they should now draw financial strength.”

(v) Block Grants to Dioceses

We turn now from the raising of the money to its administration. It would be possible for the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches to administer its grants directly. But the task of sifting applications from thousands of churches all over the country would be a heavy burden, and we consider it better that the unappropriated funds at the disposal of the trustees should be used in block grants to the diocesan funds, and that the administrators of the diocesan funds should make the grants to individual parishes. The diocese is a unit of convenient size, and the administrators of the diocesan funds will have little difficulty in saying which churches are in need and in what order or priority they should be treated. This question of priority is extremely important, for there are some churches where a delay of a few years might be disastrous. The need to establish an order of priorities has been specially urged upon us by the Society of Antiquaries. The diocesan authorities are in a better position than any national body could be to draw up such a list of priorities. The Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches would not possess the local knowledge needed to sift applications quickly, and might easily get lost in a bureaucratic fog if it attempted to make grants to individual churches. In making its first block grants it could be guided by the archdeacons' returns that we have obtained, and the fact that they are only a first approximation need not matter as within a few years it will have the first results of the architects' inspections, and will be able to revise its ideas accordingly.

If, as we hope, the Pilgrim Trust resumes its grants for the preservation of parish churches, the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches will need to consult with it and with the Incorporated Church Building Society and the Society of Antiquaries to ensure co-ordination of their grants. This would also be a help to harassed incumbents, who now spend much time in separately canvassing every possible source of help.

(vi) Position of Existing Bodies

The question arises whether some existing body could be used

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instead of creating new machinery as suggested above. The Church Commissioners have much experience in the careful handling of ecclesiastical revenues and as we have already stated they are responsible for the upkeep of 1,452 chancels wholly or partly. They have discharged their own responsibility for repairs faithfully. But this is only incidental to their main work. Their properties and funds have come to them for the support of the living agent engaged in the cure of souls. To give to the Church Commissioners the tasks described above would mean a radical alteration of their work and would require legislation in Parliament which they are not likely to desire.

The Central Council for the Care of Churches and the diocesan advisory committees also leap to the mind on account of the valuable services which they have already rendered. But they have never been concerned with the raising or disbursement of money, and it would probably detract from the value of their work to have these tasks imposed upon them. The way in which their services can best be utilized is in giving advice before grants are allocated.

The Friends of Ancient English Churches Trust, fully constituted in May 1950, is a body which calls for closer consideration, the more so as it covers much of the ground outlined above for the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches and is working along the same lines. In evidence submitted to us the trustees say :

“The country’s ancient churches could in many districts be saved by the enterprise of county associations formed for such a purpose and enlisting the support of all who for many different reasons are interested in the preservation of such buildings.

“The encouragement given by a grant from an outside trust to an area or a parish where conditions are really difficult may make all the difference between tackling the problem and giving it up as hopeless. Such grants must clearly come from a central fund co-ordinated with local branches.

“The Friends of Ancient English Churches Trust is endeavouring to foster such county associations . . . and also to build up such a central fund . . . At the time of writing, county associations are in process of formation in Staffordshire, Cheshire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire, while attempts are being made to link up with and assist the existing association in Kent and the projected one in Essex.”

Since these words were written, the Friends of Essex Churches has been formally constituted. The trustees are awaiting the decision of the Church Assembly on our report before taking any further steps. The organization which they were in the process of creating is exactly along the lines to which we have been independ-

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ently led, and in the short period of their existence they have already done much excellent work. The question therefore arises whether it would be advisable to invite the Friends to assume the role which we have described for the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches. There are, nevertheless, good reasons, we think, for the creation of a new body along the lines we have described in which, we hope, the trust would allow itself to be merged; and such county organizations as are in existence would, we hope, also be willing to place themselves under the guidance of the proposed new trust. In order to raise the large sum of money needed the national body must be so constituted as to win the confidence of the whole of the nation from the outset. Like so many excellent bodies in England the Friends of Ancient English Churches Trust arose as the result of a private initiative by Mr. A. P. D. Penrose in 1949, and although the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have become patrons of the trust and appoint four trustees it cannot command the authority which we regard as desirable. The trust has pointed the way; and if we now suggest that it should be merged in a more authoritative body it is in no spirit of depreciation but in gratitude for the lead given.

We are happy to say that the present trustees of the Friends of Ancient English Churches Trust concur in this reasoning, and, having shown the way, would be content to see the work taken over by the more authoritative body we have proposed. We are not able to answer for the county societies already in existence or in process of formation, and no doubt they will wish to consider their relationship to the Trust for the Preservation of Historic Churches if and when it comes into being. But we believe they would wish to co-operate, and we assume that there would not, in any case, be any question of setting up another body in these counties to do the same type of work.