



 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

ARCHBISHOPS'
COUNCIL

Mr Mark Reckless, MP
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

Rt Revd Christopher Hill
Lord Bishop of Guildford

Chair, House of Bishops Europe
Panel

20 June 2012

Dear Mark,

I write further to your recent comments of 19 June 2012 regarding the submission from the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into the UK's relationship with the EU.

Having sat through various Europe focused debates in the Upper House, I am all too aware that Europe is an emotive and divisive subject and that this is an area where the Church should tread carefully. I do however think you have been a little ungenerous in your reading of the submission.

The submission starts from the basis that for the Church the primary purpose of politics - even European politics - is the promotion of human flourishing and the conditions that are necessary to make this happen. Positions adopted by the General Synod in 1972, 1990, and 2004 has led the Church to the position that while it has reservations over certain characteristics of European integration, not least its democratic deficit, our propensity as humans created in the image of God to be creative, productive and generous beings has been enhanced by pooling certain elements of national sovereignty in a common European project.

It is against this background that the submission expresses certain reservations regarding Britain's negotiating strategy and the need for a more informed public and political debate that might shape both a renewed vision for Europe as well as our own understanding of how we might best realise it. I am of course aware that this position and line of reasoning is not necessarily shared by all Christians, let alone those who make up the Church of England, but it is consistent nonetheless with the positions agreed by the General Synod, the Church of England's parliament.

Whether our human flourishing continues to be enhanced by this political arrangement is of course open to debate. As you point out there is an emerging consensus in favour of a referendum on Britain's continued membership of the EU. In the event that such a referendum does take place Christians will no doubt find themselves in good faith taking differing views.

The Church's official role during any referendum will be to provide a safe space in which constructive debate can take place. As during General Elections the Church will no doubt wish to encourage its members and the wider nation to approach any referendum question prayerfully and very much from the perspective of what political arrangement best enhances human flourishing and dignity.

If you would like to discuss this matter further then maybe we might meet when we are both next in Parliament.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rt Revd Christopher Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

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