

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ‘To stay, serve and witness’ – church politics and British inner cities in the 1980s

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## Abstract

By analysing the Church of England’s 1985 report *Faith in the City (FITC)*, this article demonstrates that the church played a decisive role in shaping the discourse on British ‘inner cities’. Following a brief historical contextualization, the article examines the *FITC* report itself, how it came about and what arguments the Church of England introduced into the national debate on inner cities, as well as the media and political discussion that followed its publication and the reactions in the religious field. The article argues that the publication was a turning point in the inner cities discourse of the 1980s. It examines how the church succeeded in (re)directing national attention to the topic thereby countering the territorial stigmatization and replacing it with a more positive view focused on the potential of the residents living in the inner cities.

I hold strongly to the view that all the churches have an inescapable moral duty to speak out, in the name of human compassion, when social conditions are created as a result of political action – or inertia – by whatever political parties, which have led to deprivation in the living conditions of citizens in the inner cities.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to *The Times* on 7 December 1985, Lord John Hunt stressed the role churches should play in the discussion of so-called ‘inner cities’ in the mid-1980s. This article adds a religio-historical dimension to research on inner cities by considering the intense renewal of these debates as a response to the urban uprisings of 1980–81 and 1985. In addition to politicians, entrepreneurs, trade

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<sup>1</sup>Lord J. Hunt, ‘No need for schism on inner cities’, *Times*, 7 Dec. 1985, 9.

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unionists and residents, religious institutions such as the Church of England (C of E) played a decisive role in shaping the discourse on inner cities, and its 1985 report *Faith in the City (FITC)* serves as an excellent example of how. However, the role religious actors played in this debate has not yet been fully examined. While the report has been considered in some publications, these studies have, for the most part, been either contemporary reflective publications by church actors or primarily interested in the report's theological implications.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, hardly any historical analysis has been undertaken to date and when it has, it has focused on either the naming of the report or highlighting its role in the conflict between the C of E and the Thatcher government.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the report's contribution to the national debate on inner cities has not yet been comprehensively studied. By filling this gap, this article examines how the C of E sought to influence the public discourse on poverty and inequality through the 1985 report, *Faith in the City*.

The report was the first official C of E document to explicitly condemn the politics and policies of the Conservative party regarding inner cities. Its publication was a turning point in the inner-city discourse of the 1970s and 1980s during which the C of E successfully (re)directed national attention to the topic of inner cities. Accordingly, the church took on a dynamic role and was instrumental in stimulating and shaping the debate on inner-city policies in the mid-1980s in a way that not only considered the inhabitants of the areas described as inner cities but people living in the suburbs and rural areas as well. It thereby countered the negative and deprecating image prevalent in external contemporary perceptions of inner-city residents, and the associated territorial stigmatization, with a more positive, sympathetic view focused on the potential of residents living in the inner cities that had previously been of only limited influence, and then largely within the cities concerned.<sup>4</sup> In the long run, the C of E achieved its self-formulated core objective; for the plight of the inner cities became recognized as a national issue. The church created a new role for itself as an important player in the debate and claimed to be able to decisively shape the discourse on inner cities through its presence in the communities concerned.<sup>5</sup>

## The Church of England, cities and politics

Although faith communities have historically been an important factor in dealing with urban spaces, their inhabitants and social and political problems, the C of E

<sup>2</sup>For example, R. Farnell, *Faith in the City and Local Politics* (London, 1988); E. Graham, 'Theology in the city: ten years after Faith in the City', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 78 (1996), 173–92.

<sup>3</sup>E. Filby, *God and Mrs. Thatcher: The Battle for Britain's Soul* (New York, 2015), 172–80; P. Itzen, 'Wo liegt das Königreich des Himmels? Der Streit um die politische Funktion des Glaubens in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren', in A. Lewicki *et al.* (eds.), *Religiöse Gegenwartskultur. Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung* (Münster 2012), 101–18.

<sup>4</sup>On the negative external perception of 'inner cities', see the introduction to this Special Issue; on the 'territorial stigmatization' mainly by the national press, see A. Butler, 'Toxic Toxteth: understanding press stigmatization of Toxteth during the 1981 uprising', *Journalism*, 21 (2020), 541–56; on stereotypes in press coverage, see I. Carter, 'Youth, race and the inner-city estate: narratives of everyday life in Manchester's Hulme, 1970–1994' in this Special Issue of *Urban History*.

<sup>5</sup>Church of England, Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation (FITC)* (London, 1985), xiv, 27.

has not traditionally played a significant role in the urban working-class milieu since the nineteenth century. This is also the case in the period studied here as the majority of urban working-class people were not part of church communities in the early 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Rather, congregations were characterized by a white, mainly conservative middle class that was primarily concentrated in the suburbs and rural areas of England. Nevertheless, the C of E repeatedly directed attention towards urban space(s) and industrial workers, addressing the working classes and attempting to integrate them into the church. Its primary concern was to missionize. The Industrial Mission Association (established after World War II) is an early example of the ecumenical initiatives associated with this evangelization.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, and (self-)critically, the later Bishop Edward Ralph Wickham dealt with this topic theologically for the first time in his publication *Church & Politics in an Industrial City* in 1957. Nevertheless, the church struggled especially in urban areas where it was confronted with a large group of 'unchurched' people.<sup>8</sup> Despite all the difficulties of addressing and integrating the working classes, an extensive network of urban Anglican parishes remained active in the following decades.<sup>9</sup> The motivation for this action has its origins in the church's history and tradition. As the Established Church, the C of E traditionally portrayed itself as *the* representative of Christian values in English society and, therefore, as Peter Itzen points out, as responsible for the entire nation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the C of E maintained its presence in the cities and the local congregations were regularly confronted with the problems of people living there.

In spite of these efforts, membership of mainstream Christian churches in Britain had been declining steadily since the 1960s, and there were fewer than 7 million active members in 1985.<sup>11</sup> At that time, only 13 per cent of British people identified themselves as active members of the Anglican Church.<sup>12</sup> Numerous statistical indicators point to a simultaneous decline in religiosity in Britain; for example, the already low level of churchgoers and participation in religious *rites de passage* such as baptisms, church marriages and confirmations continued to fall throughout the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, participation in church life was particularly low in cities with fewer than 1 per cent of the population in the deprived inner cities attending Sunday services in 1985.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 28–32, 74.

<sup>7</sup>See e.g. P. Bagshaw, *The Church beyond the Church. Sheffield Industrial Mission 1944–1994* (Sheffield, 1994).

<sup>8</sup>G. Parsons, 'Contrasts and continuities: the traditional Christian churches in Britain since 1945, in *idem* (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945*, I (London, 1994), 49.

<sup>9</sup>G. Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994), 55, 152.

<sup>10</sup>P. Itzen, *Streitbare Kirche. Die Church of England vor den Herausforderungen des Wandels 1945–1990* (Baden-Baden, 2012), 35.

<sup>11</sup>See C. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain. Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*, 2nd edn (London, 2009), 188–90; Davie, *Religion*, 46–56; H. McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2010), 1, 188, 196; Parsons, 'Contrasts', 68.

<sup>12</sup>Parsons, 'Contrasts', 68–9; FITC, 27.

<sup>13</sup>Brown, *The Death*, 187–91; Davie, *Religion*, 52–4; A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920–1990* (London, 1991), 603; McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, 1, 188–202.

<sup>14</sup>FITC, 33.

However, recent studies have shown that the narrative of terminal religious decline and the emergence of the British ‘secular society’ needs to be replaced by a more differentiated view, and to this end, this article attempts to offer a more nuanced approach to secularization.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, it is important to consider that despite the decreasing number of members and low participation in religious rituals, the C of E remained an important social and political institution in that, for example, its bishops retained their roles in the House of Lords. The C of E appeared to be a core part of the ‘establishment’.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, in the 1980s, this political role was increasingly questioned and an intense debate began about the place of church actors in politics: whether they should be allowed to take a stand on political issues and, if so, how this should take place.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the relationship between the church hierarchy and Thatcherite politics had been tense since Margaret Thatcher took office in 1979. At the beginning of the 1980s, the C of E and the Conservative party repeatedly found themselves in opposition. This was evident, for example, during the discussions about how to conduct the service at the end of the Falklands War in which the Conservatives accused the church of deviating from the government line.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, the situation in the inner cities continued to deteriorate throughout the 1980s due to the accelerated de-industrialization processes, the effects of monetarism and urban uprisings.<sup>19</sup> Being confronted with the situation every day, the clergy living and working in affected areas reported their experiences to the church’s leadership.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the inner cities became recognized as an increasingly urgent topic within the church, or at least within the urban dioceses, and numerous individuals and local groups – as well as other Christian denominations – became involved in Urban Mission.<sup>21</sup> The church was strongly involved in the voluntary sector and also co-operated with the Manpower Services Commission to manage employment and training programmes.<sup>22</sup> In the early 1980s, the Anglican dioceses and their regional Boards for Social Responsibility had working groups in Liverpool and Manchester closely examine the situation in their inner-urban areas. The reports of these two working groups can be considered regional

<sup>15</sup>S. Brewitt-Taylor, ‘The invention of a “secular society”? Christianity and the sudden appearance of secularization discourses in the British national media, 1961–64’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 24 (2013), 327–50; A. Harris, ‘“The writings of querulous women”. Contraception, conscience and clerical authority in 1960s Britain’, *British Catholic History*, 32 (2015), 557–85; D. Warner, ‘When two tribes go to war: Orange parades, religious identity and urban space in Liverpool, 1965–1985’, *Oral History*, 47 (2019), 30–42.

<sup>16</sup>Davie, *Religion*, 141–9. For a discussion of the bishop’s role and action in parliament, see Filby, *God*, 161–3.

<sup>17</sup>See Itzen, ‘Wo liegt’, 102–8.

<sup>18</sup>Itzen, *Streitbare Kirche*, 318–20; see also Filby, *God*, 157–60.

<sup>19</sup>O. Saumarez Smith, ‘The inner city crisis and the end of urban modernism in 1970s Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 27 (2016), 598; *idem*, ‘Action for cities: the Thatcher government and inner-city policy’, *Urban History*, 46 (2019), 4.

<sup>20</sup>On the local network of parishes, see Filby, *God*, 165.

<sup>21</sup>For instance the *Methodist Mission alongside the Poor*, the *Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission*, *Church Action with the Unemployed* or *Church Action on Poverty*.

<sup>22</sup>E. Filby, ‘Faith, charity and citizenship. Christianity, voluntarism and the state in the 1980s’, in M. Hilton and J. McKay (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How We Got to the Big Society* (Oxford, 2011).

predecessors of the FITC, having reflected on both the ‘problems and resilience’ of inner cities and focused their considerations entirely on church life and mission.<sup>23</sup> In addition, David Sheppard,<sup>24</sup> bishop of Liverpool, published his book *Bias to the Poor* in 1983. It dealt with his experiences in Liverpool, highlighting urban problems and conflicts, and calling for a social commitment to those living in the inner cities based on Christian faith. The book generated considerable attention throughout the country and was widely received beyond the affected urban regions. Bishop Sheppard also became an important figure in the creation of the national FITC report, helping to initiate and shape it as a member of the Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas.

### The Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas

In this context, an informal group of urban bishops, who publicly promoted national solidarity with unemployed youth in the ‘deprived inner cities’<sup>25</sup> during the 1981 urban uprisings, raised the idea of establishing a commission on so-called ‘Urban Priority Areas’.<sup>26</sup> They, thereby, adopted an idea that Anglican Canon Eric James, director of Christian Action, had formulated in a letter to *The Times* in May 1981. Under the influence of the uprisings, James called for the establishment of an archbishop’s ‘Staying There’ Commission, whose task would be ‘to report on the Church’s strategy for the inner-city’.<sup>27</sup> After discussing his concerns with a group of urban bishops informally in the spring of 1982, Bishop Sheppard presented his concept for such a commission.<sup>28</sup> Eventually, in July 1983, Archbishop Robert Runcie established the so-called ‘Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas’ (ACUPA).<sup>29</sup> Its task was: ‘to examine the strength, insights, problems and needs of the Church’s life and mission in Urban Priority Areas and, as a result, to reflect on the challenge which God may be making to Church and Nation: and to make recommendations to appropriate bodies’.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to representatives of the church hierarchy, including Bishop Sheppard and Bishop Wilfred Wood, the first black Anglican bishop in England, clergymen and a theologian, the commission involved lay people from inner-city

<sup>23</sup>Both diocesan reports were republished in the *Christian Aid Journal*. Church of England Record Centre (CERC), PB 088, *Christian Action Journal*, Autumn 1983, ‘The Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas’, 10–35, quotation: 10.

<sup>24</sup>On Sheppard’s religious and political influence in Liverpool, see M. Power, ‘Reconciling state and society? The practice of the common good in the partnership of Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock’, *Journal of Religious History*, 40 (2016), 545–64.

<sup>25</sup>‘Putting the heart back into deprived inner cities’, *Times*, 25 Jul. 1981, 13.

<sup>26</sup>CERC, ACUPA/C/1/8: Correspondence with the diocese of Manchester, letter from Stanley Booth-Clibborn to John Pearson, 13 Sep. 1983. On the claim to function like a ‘royal commission’, see R. O’Brian *et al.*, *Faith in the Scottish City: The Scottish Relevance of the Report of the Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas* (Edinburgh, 1986), 1.

<sup>27</sup>‘Church’s inner-city weakness’, *Times*, 27 May 1981, 13. He described his idea in more detail in *Christian Action Journal*, Summer 1981.

<sup>28</sup>CERC, ACUPA/C/6: ACUPA – Correspondence – Formation of ACUPA, 1983, letter from David Sheppard, 6 Jan. 1983; CERC, ACUPA/C/2/14, ACUPA – Correspondence – Members and Resource Bodies: James, Eric (1983–85), letter from Eric James, 21 May 1984.

<sup>29</sup>‘Runcie launches inner-city study’, *Times*, 7 Jul. 1983, 2.

<sup>30</sup>FITC, iii.

parishes, local politicians, social workers, academic experts, business representatives and a trade unionist. Although the claim for ecumenism was formulated, the ecumenical orientation was very limited since the other Christian denominations had only one representative, the Roman Catholic layperson, Robina Rafferty (Catholic Housing Aid Society), although existing ecumenical church initiatives, including the Evangelical Coalition of Urban Mission and the William Temple Foundation, were also consulted. Eric James played a significant role in the creation of the report as a so-called ‘resource point’.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Anglicans clearly dominated the group. That being said, the composition of the membership reflected the commission’s claim to have analysed the situation from a ‘religious and secular dimension’.<sup>32</sup> Ties with the political establishment were evidenced by the fact that the secretary of the commission, John N. Pearson, was delegated by the Department of Environment in a show of support for ACUPA’s investigation. Furthermore, the central government provided material and information.<sup>33</sup> Hence, unsurprisingly, contemporary observers regularly emphasized ‘the high level of co-operation’ between the commission and governmental departments.<sup>34</sup>

The commission started its work in September 1983 and investigated the so-called ‘Urban Priority Areas’ over the next two years. ACUPA met 17 times and formed various thematic subgroups. Collectively, they received several hundred submissions from diocesan working groups, locally engaged groups and active inner-city parishioners reporting on their daily lives, local concerns and needs, but also on their work and hopes.<sup>35</sup> These were included in *FITC* to ensure the voices of inner-city residents were heard. The commission also utilized both pre-existing and self-commissioned sociological studies, and incorporated concept papers by experts – sociologist Dr Grace Davie and historian Dr Hugh McLeod. However, the report’s central sources were government statistics and the Labour government’s 1977 White Paper *Policy for the Inner Cities*.<sup>36</sup> This paper was fundamentally connected to the 400-page *FITC* report, which even opened with a reference to the White Paper – rather than to the Bible as readers might expect.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup>CERC, ACUPA/C/2/14, ACUPA – Correspondence – Members and Resource Bodies: James, Eric (1983–85).

<sup>32</sup>*FITC*, iii. Members of the commission: Reverend Alan Billings, David Booth, John Burn, Reverend Andrew Hake, Prof. A.H. Halsey, Reverend Dr Anthony Harvey, Ron Keating, Ruth McCurry, Sir Richard O’Brian (chairman), Prof. R.E. Pahl, Prof. John Pickering, Robina Rafferty, Reverend Mano Rumalshah, Bishop David Sheppard, Linbert Spencer, Mary Sugden, Reverend Barry Thorley and Bishop Wilfred Wood.

<sup>33</sup>‘Evidence from government’, in CERC, ACUPA/C/2/17, ACUPA – Correspondence – Members and Resource Bodies: Richard O’Brian (1983–85), J. Pearson, memorandum, 10 Apr. 1984; *ibid.*, Draft letter to G. Reid, Department of Employment.

<sup>34</sup>C. Longley, ‘“Marxist” slur on inner-city report’, *Times*, 2 Dec. 1985, 1; already similar in ‘Runcie launches inner-city study’, *Times*, 7 Jul. 1983, 2.

<sup>35</sup>A list of the submissions in *FITC*, 389–97. Letters from local inner-city parishioners in K. Leech and T. Drummond (eds.), *Letters from Seven Churches* (London, 1984).

<sup>36</sup>*Policy for the Inner Cities. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales by Command of Her Majesty*, 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers 44, June 1977. For the White Paper, see Saumarez Smith, ‘Crisis’, 584, 597.

<sup>37</sup>*FITC*, xiii, 169–74.

In terms of both design and language, the *FITC* report was predominantly presented and designed as a scientific study.

It is also noteworthy that ACUPA made several visits to deprived areas to see what the situation was like for themselves. Their last visit took them to Manchester on 7–9 December 1984. The local diocese had prepared an extensive programme for them including informative lectures, public hearings and meetings with inhabitants and local church representatives.<sup>38</sup> However, these visits were not always free of conflict. The programme for Manchester, for example, was criticized with city councils and church representatives from Salford refusing to co-operate because they assumed the commission would meet with the wrong people and form an incorrect picture of the situation, which they called a ‘put-up job’.<sup>39</sup> This criticism points to the fact that *FITC* was not *the* Anglican position, but represented the commission’s judgements and perceptions. Although the church’s hierarchy and a majority in the General Synod supported ACUPA’s findings, there was, as will be shown in the last section of this article, conflict within the church.

### The *Faith in the City* report’s contribution to the discourse on inner cities

Based on its two years of research, the commission produced the *FITC* report, which was unanimously adopted by its members.<sup>40</sup> ACUPA took on the indefinite term ‘inner cities’, which had been used in Britain since the mid-1960s to locate the problems and conflicts of British society, the perceptions of deprivation and crisis, and which implied racist othering.<sup>41</sup> The report specifically expanded the concept of inner cities in terms of space. As stated in its terms of reference, the commission dealt not only with inner cities but with the so-called ‘Urban Priority Areas’ (UPAs): ACUPA included large urban and suburban post-war housing estates as well as inner-city areas of older housing on the presumption that these territories shared similar problems.<sup>42</sup> Thus, they increased the radius of affected people and widened their perspective, defining UPAs as ‘districts of specially disadvantaged character’.<sup>43</sup> The ACUPA described these zones as places that ‘suffer from economic decline, physical decay, and social disintegration’.<sup>44</sup> In order to be considered a UPA, they further emphasized that old port or manufacturing areas must be experiencing decline in these three ways. In doing so, the report paralleled the 1970s debate, which localized multiple deprivations in inner cities.<sup>45</sup> According

<sup>38</sup>CERC, ACUPA/V/3/2, Papers relating to ACUPA’s visit to Manchester (7–9 Dec. 1984), letter from O’Brian to Runcie, 10 Jun. 1985.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>For unanimity, see O’Brian *et al.*, *Faith*, 1.

<sup>41</sup>On the inner-city crisis narrative, see the introduction to this Special Issue and Saumarez Smith, ‘Crisis’, 581–2; on the concept’s emergence in the mid-1960s, see A. Kefford, ‘Disruption, destruction and the creation of “the inner city”’, *Urban History*, 44 (2017), 494.

<sup>42</sup>*FITC*, in particular 176–7.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 9, 10, 24.

<sup>45</sup>For a discussion on the emergence of ‘multiple deprivation’ and the localization of problems in inner cities, see A. Andrews, ‘Multiple deprivation, the inner city and the fracturing of the welfare state’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 (2018), 605–24.

to Otto Saumarez Smith, the debate located all the concerns and needs, as well as the undesirable developments in British society, in the inner cities,<sup>46</sup> which symbolized decline and crisis.<sup>47</sup> As the report presented the existence of multiply deprived UPAs as a historical fact, *FITC* was not only able to connect with the debate of the 1970s, it revived the debate about inner cities while making significant contributions to it by highlighting a more positive view of inner-city residents.

In order to identify the affected regions, the commission used the Department of Environment's identification scheme that was applied in the 1981 census and based on six indicators of deprivation:<sup>48</sup> unemployment, old people living alone, single-parent families, ethnicity, overcrowding of homes and homes lacking basic amenities. At the same time, ACUPA stressed that, from their point of view, there were other factors such as health or crime that should also be included in the analysis.<sup>49</sup> Yet, the central factor was poverty caused by the triple decline of the UPAs and the commission highlighted that relative poverty had profoundly increased leading to feelings of 'powerlessness' and 'growing inequality'.<sup>50</sup> By considering the concept of 'relative poverty', then primarily discussed in sociology, Professors Halsey and Pahl shaped ACUPA's approach.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, according to the report, the UPA population was excluded from the community life of the nation<sup>52</sup> with the result that self-help was not possible for them either. Hence, the report rejected the neoliberal dictum of individual responsibility assumed by the Thatcher government.<sup>53</sup> Instead, the commission explicitly emphasized: '*We believe that at present too much emphasis is being given to individualism and not enough to collective obligation.*'<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, they predicted that the current political focus would have unacceptable consequences for society, diagnosing the 'polarization' and division of the British nation.<sup>55</sup> In fact, they went so far as to say Britain had become 'two nations' estranged from each other and requested the adoption of a model of a unified society.<sup>56</sup> The report stated the problems of inner cities and urban housing estates were structural, and so their solution would lie in 'collective responsibility'.<sup>57</sup> In doing so, they rejected the contemporary patterns of argumentation that attributed lethargy to inner-city residents and demanded more individual responsibility from them. Furthermore, the commission picked up central themes of the 1980s inner-city discourse but rejected the stigmatization of inner cities and the people living therein, which was reinforced by the

<sup>46</sup>Saumarez Smith, 'Crisis', 581–2.

<sup>47</sup>Saumarez Smith, 'Action', 3–4.

<sup>48</sup>*FITC*, 10–21.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 10, 13.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, xiv–xvi, 24–5.

<sup>51</sup>For the debate on 'relative poverty', see Filby, *God*, 174; Graham, 'Theology', 176.

<sup>52</sup>*FITC*, 359.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 47; for the Thatcherite inner-city policy, see Saumarez Smith, 'Action'.

<sup>54</sup>*FITC*, 208 (italics in the original).

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, xv, 22–4.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 360.



'negativity', 'oppositonality' and 'stranger-making'<sup>58</sup> that was common in external perceptions.<sup>59</sup>

*FITC* countered the widespread narrative of individual responsibility and the lack of motivation on the part of the inner-city inhabitants with a narrative of hope and community responsibility. Therefore, ACUPA emphasized their willingness to raise awareness and inform not just church members but the whole nation about the situation in inner cities. They wanted to clarify what real life in the inner cities was like and called for a 'major national debate on the future of our cities' in which the C of E would, and should, play an important role.<sup>60</sup> Concurrently, ACUPA repeatedly emphasized 'hope' and attempted to bring a more positive view of the inner cities and their inhabitants into the discourse. They presented a resource- and potential-oriented perspective on inner cities which, until then, had mainly only been seen among the residents themselves. The report regarded UPAs as places of business, politics and (church) life. Consequently, the commission stressed that the UPAs could rise again. Thus, the report ended with the ambiguous sentence 'We have found faith in the city.'<sup>61</sup>

Based on their analysis of the UPAs, the report outlined various decline and poverty factors – for instance unemployment, poor housing and lack of education<sup>62</sup> – and suggested numerous, sometimes very concrete, recommendations. Overall, they recommended 38 inner-city policies to the C of E itself and 23 'to government and nation', predominantly calling for extensive, new investments by central government and emphasizing the urgent need for action.<sup>63</sup> In addition to much-needed greater public spending – for example, they proposed to extend the urban aid programme, increase child and unemployment benefits and expand public housing programmes – ACUPA argued that the inner cities should generally be given a much higher priority in politics. Their attractiveness for companies should be increased, smaller companies promoted and more responsibility transferred to local governments. In particular, they called for the initiation and promotion of local partnerships in which the churches should be an important component. These proposed interventionist inner-city policies stood in clear contrast to the Thatcherite urban policies aimed at increasing the attractiveness for private investments.

In its political chapters, ACUPA claimed expertise on the inner cities and their problems and defended the, in their perception, deprived inhabitants – this earned them not entirely unfounded accusations of paternalism.<sup>64</sup> Their proposals heavily criticized the Thatcher government's actions as 'inadequate and superficial'.<sup>65</sup> According to *FITC*, the situation in inner-city areas had continued to deteriorate

<sup>58</sup>For an analysis of the strategies underlying territorial stigmatization of inner cities in the 1980s, see Butler, 'Toxic Toxteth'.

<sup>59</sup>On the 1980s problematization of inner cities as 'sites of crime, decay and racial strife', see Kefford, 'Disruption'; likewise Filby, *God*, 180; Saumarez Smith, 'Crisis', 597.

<sup>60</sup>*FITC*, 359.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 195–355.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 361–6.

<sup>64</sup>Filby, *God*, 174, 177.

<sup>65</sup>*FITC*, 174.

after the 1977 White Paper and the government had directly contributed to the situation by implementing further funding cuts, withdrawing the power from local authorities and relying on the private sector.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, given the end of industrial society (as diagnosed by the report), ACUPA called on the government to adopt an economic strategy that eliminated inequality. This would require massively increased financial support and governmental investment,<sup>67</sup> more power for local governments and partnerships with local actors and inhabitants.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, the political sections of *FITC* defended the post-war political consensus and the established welfare state that had been undermined by Thatcher politics.<sup>69</sup> They called for the state to ensure its citizens are better off and guarantee their social well-being, and take responsibility for the economy.<sup>70</sup> According to St Paul, society should, in turn, be based on solidarity and ‘remember the poor’.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, the commission admitted that the church itself had also failed the ‘Urban Priority Areas’. A large part of the report contained recommendations addressed to the church that were based on critical reflections on its own relationship with the UPAs. *FITC* assigned a new role to the C of E in these areas as well as in the political debate about inner cities. In particular, the commission called on the church to assume responsibility and to engage neighbourly and communally. The entire church should, they recommended, be sensitized and the UPAs financially supported. Moreover, the church’s task was to rouse and maintain national interest in the inner cities and, in particular, to question whether future economic policies were morally justifiable. Thus, the commission positioned itself within the broader contemporary debate about the possibilities and limits of church involvement in politics: ‘How it affects the poor’<sup>72</sup> had to be fundamental to the Christian assessment of public policy. The report also theologically justified the social and political engagement of Christians for the orientation of society:<sup>73</sup> the C of E was obliged to act, as the present situation in English inner cities was not compatible with Christian faith,<sup>74</sup> and there was a risk of losing touch with a ‘just and compassionate social order’.<sup>75</sup> Hence, ACUPA represented political commitment as a contribution to church ‘community work’,<sup>76</sup> for this could help to create the ‘Kingdom of God in a form of human society’.<sup>77</sup>

Additionally, the *FITC* report can be placed in the broader ecclesiastical or theological tradition of the relationship of church and society epitomized by Archbishop William Temple, who promoted the idea that the C of E should not only care for its

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 173–4.

<sup>67</sup>E.g. *ibid.*, 181–4, 194.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>69</sup>Filby, *God*, 176. For the defence of the welfare state by the church in general, see also H.B. Clark, *The Church under Thatcher* (London, 1993), 34–48.

<sup>70</sup>*FITC*, 187.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 47 (Galatians, 2:10).

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>73</sup>Especially in ch. 3, *ibid.*, 47–60, 65–70.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 56–7.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 58, 279.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 59. For the ‘Kingdom of God’ theology, see Itzen, ‘Wo liegt’, 107–11.

members but the entire community. In keeping with this principle, the church should be part of the neighbourly partnerships within the UPAs, which consisted of employers, trade unions, local public authorities, residents and voluntary organizations including church and religious bodies.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the commissioners strongly recommended permanent co-operation between state and voluntary bodies.

### 'Hysteria'? *FITC* in the political and media debate

In her impressive study *God and Mrs. Thatcher*, historian Eliza Filby summed up the 1980s noting '[t]he Church still had the capacity to set the agenda',<sup>79</sup> a statement that also applied to *FITC*. With its publication, the C of E succeeded in initiating and influencing a renewed debate about inner cities and inner-city policies in the mid-1980s amongst the British public and in the political arena. Therefore, Otto Saumarez Smith is correct in his characterization of the publication as one of the three key moments in the inner-city debates that drew the whole nation's attention.<sup>80</sup>

Through the report, the problems of the inner cities once again became an important political issue. Opposition politicians used its publication to discuss inner cities, to strengthen their own debating positions and to attack the government for its urban policies based on the findings of the report. The numerous inquiries sent to the government and debates in both houses of parliament prove this.<sup>81</sup> The MPs considered the commission's recommendations extensively and many members of parliament defended ACUPA's findings about the inner cities against the Thatcher government.<sup>82</sup> Exemplifying their reaction, the debate on the deprivation in inner-urban areas, the government's (in)action and the results of the *FITC* report prompted the opposition to dedicate the House of Commons 'opposition day', 11 December 1985, to this cause.<sup>83</sup>

The parliamentary debates – in which government representatives initially reacted mildly, praising the report as a serious contribution to the debate even if, according to the leader of the Commons, John Biffen, it did not make any substantial new contributions<sup>84</sup> – contrasted significantly with the critical reactions of government representatives to *FITC* in the media. Contemporary observers were

<sup>78</sup>*FITC*, 185–8, 190–2.

<sup>79</sup>Filby, *God*, 163.

<sup>80</sup>Saumarez Smith, 'Action', 4.

<sup>81</sup>See, for instance, Hansard, Contents, Written Answers, Environment, Inner Urban Areas, 4 Dec 1985; *ibid.*, Commons Chamber, Opposition Day, 2nd Allotted Day, Inner Cities, 11 Dec. 1985; *ibid.*, Written Answers, Prime Minister, Urban Priority Areas, 13 Jan. 1986; *ibid.*, Written Answers, Environment, 'Faith in the City', 10 Feb. 1986; *ibid.*, Commons Chamber, Oral Answers to Questions, Environment, Faith in the City, 19 Feb. 1986.

<sup>82</sup>See also about this: W. Schwarz and J. Naughtier, 'Church believes attack a failure', *Guardian*, 4 Dec. 1985, 32.

<sup>83</sup>Hansard, Inner Cities, 11 Dec. 1985. For the bishops in parliament, see K. Medhurst and G. Moyser, 'Lambeth Palace, the bishops and politics', in G. Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today. Essays on the Role of the Church of England in Contemporary Politics* (Edinburgh, 1985), 76–88.

<sup>84</sup>Hansard, Contents, Commons Chamber, Oral Answers to Questions, Column 153; C. Longley, 'Runcie gives low-key reply to defuse clash of church and government', *Times*, 4 Dec. 1985, 2.

surprised by the reactions in government circles as they were in stark contrast to the previous support of the commission's work:<sup>85</sup> it seems the Conservative politicians were far less cautious in their judgements on *FITC* in their public statements. They interpreted the report as an attack on their urban policies and, feeling challenged, they took drastic action: a couple of days before the press conference Archbishop Robert Runcie had scheduled for Tuesday, 3 December 1985, an unidentified member of government leaked the report, condemning it as 'pure Marxist theology' in *The Sunday Times*.<sup>86</sup> This was, presumably, an attempt to discredit the report before it was officially published and deter voters of the Conservative party, who also constituted the majority of church members, from supporting it.<sup>87</sup> This leak ignited an extensive media debate, which attracted enormous attention for the publication.

In order to fully understand the contemporary reactions, it is necessary to consider them in their historical context, as other events, especially the miners' strike of 1984–85, also intensified the conflict between the church (leadership) and the government.<sup>88</sup> It was in this tense environment that Norman Tebbit, chairman of the Conservative party and the person to whom the quotation has been repeatedly attributed,<sup>89</sup> questioned the neutrality of Chairman Richard O'Brien in a BBC radio interview, labelling him a supporter of the Labour party.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the secretary of state for the environment, Kenneth Baker, lamented that the report did not sufficiently dignify the government's efforts and that the proposals formulated by the church merely consisted of 'throw more money at the problem'.<sup>91</sup> He claimed the proposals were outdated since similar policies had already failed in the 1960s and 1970s. The prime minister herself said she was 'absolutely shocked' that the report did not hold families and individuals accountable.<sup>92</sup> From the point of view of contemporary media observers, the Conservative party's condemnations and attempts to discredit the report created a public 'hysteria'.<sup>93</sup> Initially, this enabled the Conservative party to avoid a substantive discussion of the arguments and findings and, in particular, the calls to action that ACUPA addressed directly to the government. Instead, Conservative politicians sought to shift the discussion away from urban policies towards a more general debate about the church–state or church–politics relationship.

Nevertheless, after this initial heated excitement, the government could not avoid dealing with the actual content of the church's observations and

<sup>85</sup> Longley, "Marxist" slur, 1.

<sup>86</sup> A. Jacobs *et al.*, 'Church report is "Marxist"', *Sunday Times*, 1 Dec. 1985, 1. The report had been sent with embargo to the press and '120 public figures' in advance: J. Judd, 'C of E defies Thatcher again', *Observer*, 1 Dec. 1985, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Filby, *God*, 172–3, 178.

<sup>88</sup> On this conflict, see Itzen, *Streitbare Kirche*, 321–73.

<sup>89</sup> E. g. A. Dinham, *Faith and Social Capital after the Debt Crisis* (London, 2012), 162.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted by Longley, 'Runcie gives'; M. van Hattem, 'Findings of report on inner cities "outdated"', *Financial Times*, 3 Dec. 1985, 12.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*; C. Longley, 'Church defends report on inner-city areas', *Times*, 3 Dec. 1985, 1, 36.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Charlton interviewed her for BBC Radio 3 on 17 Dec. 1985. See Margaret Thatcher Archive, [www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105934](http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105934), accessed 17 Apr. 2019.

<sup>93</sup> M. Brown and D. O'Sullivan, 'Turbulent priests', *Sunday Times*, 8 Dec. 1985, 17; H. Young, 'No government answer to Faith in the City', *Guardian*, 5 Dec. 1985, 19.

recommendations. At the end of January 1986, Kenneth Baker, secretary of the Department of Environment, met with high-ranking church representatives, initiating a dialogue on the problems of inner-city areas.<sup>94</sup> Ultimately, he withdrew the accusation of Marxism on behalf of the government.<sup>95</sup>

On the opposite political spectrum, Norman Willis, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, found the report important but said it was 'basically moderate'.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, he recommended the trade union members read it. Labour voices like MP Frank Field, who was an active member of the C of E, also defended the report against the accusation of Marxism while simultaneously calling on the church to begin implementing the proposals itself in order to put more pressure on the government.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Labour leader Neil Kinnock described the report as 'fair and accurate' and the proposals it contained as 'sensible and rational'.<sup>98</sup>

In the extensive media debate following the leak of the report, both critics – such as the government-linked campaigner David Hart<sup>99</sup> – and supporters – such as *The Times* religious affairs correspondent Clifford Longley<sup>100</sup> – expressed their views emphatically in the media, as did ACUPA's members. *FITC* featured in national newspapers including *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, the *Guardian* or the *Daily Mail* for several days. Most of the articles focused on the proposals directed toward the government and its urban policies, for instance ending mortgage tax relief or increasing the rates support grant for inner cities. The actual analyses of the situation formulated in *FITC* as well as its findings on 'urban priority areas' were discussed less critically and were accepted by the majority of observers, while more discussion and objection was triggered by ACUPA's conclusions. The *Guardian's* political columnist Hugo Young, for example, praised *FITC* and stressed that the report 'measures the scale of the crisis'.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, he harshly condemned the government's reactions to it, which he characterized as typical of their inadequate handling of the inner-city crisis. Instead of launching a witch-hunt against the church, he demanded that the government should enter into a substantive debate about useful ways to assist the residents.<sup>102</sup> However, the debate was repeatedly overshadowed by a more general discussion about what the church should be allowed to contribute politically.<sup>103</sup>

Debates on the church's report also flared up in letters to the editors: *The Times* alone published 18 letters within just a few days.<sup>104</sup> In the letters, clergy, including

<sup>94</sup>G. Jones *et al.*, 'Baker calls truce talks with church', *Sunday Times*, 26 Jan. 1986, 1; J. Carvel and Colin Brown, 'Church and state agree on inner cities', *Guardian*, 29 Jan. 1986, 4; 'Runcie calms storm over inner cities', *Church of England Newspaper*, 31 Jan. 1986, 3.

<sup>95</sup>C. Longeley, 'Church action is likely on cities', *Times*, 3 Feb. 1986, 2; Hansard, Contents, Written Answers, Environment, 'Faith in the City', 10 Feb. 1986.

<sup>96</sup>Longley, 'Runcie gives'.

<sup>97</sup>F. Field, 'Compassion and the inner cities', *Times*, 13 Dec. 1985, 11.

<sup>98</sup>Van Hattem, 'Findings'.

<sup>99</sup>D. Hart, 'Cities: this soulless way to salvation', *Times*, 9 Dec. 1985, 16.

<sup>100</sup>Longley, "'Marxist" slur'.

<sup>101</sup>Young, 'No government'.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup>For the debate on the relationship between church and state, see, for example, Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics*.

<sup>104</sup>Publication period of letters: 4–17 Dec. 1985.

the archbishop of York,<sup>105</sup> urban policy experts such as the director of the Industrial Society, John Garnett,<sup>106</sup> and politicians including FITC's proponent and Conservative, Sir David Lane,<sup>107</sup> discussed the report, the situation in the inner cities in general and the relationship between church and state. Their reactions ranged from praising the report as 'courageous' and a 'strong stimulus' for reflection and action by both government and church<sup>108</sup> to condemning it as 'naïve and superficial', not recognizing the 'reality' that 'unemployment and poverty are the result sometimes of misfortune and lack of opportunity, sometimes of deliberate choice and calculation'.<sup>109</sup>

ACUPA commissioner and professor of sociology Ray E. Pahl responded to these critics,<sup>110</sup> emphasizing ACUPA's will to stand up for 'one nation', whose division must be prevented. This judgement interprets the general political position of the report well as it was by no means Marxist, but rather aligned with One Nation Conservative ideas.<sup>111</sup> It explicitly opposed the neoliberal politics of Thatcherism, especially in terms of inner cities,<sup>112</sup> by defending the post-war consensus and the welfare state from the attacks of the Thatcher government.<sup>113</sup> This explains the heated media debate and the emphatic reactions of government representatives, which initially prevented a substantive debate.

Nevertheless, in the weeks and months that followed, a serious content-focused debate about inner-city politics did take place in the political arena in response to FITC. In retrospect, church actors were satisfied with how attention had been drawn to the issue and how it had been kept alive. One year after its publication, Geoffrey A. Brand, who was responsible for press relations and communications following the report, concluded: '[I]t is also true that there is greater awareness of, and concern for, the problems of the UPAs, due in no small part to the publication of the report and its follow up'.<sup>114</sup> This statement seems reasonable, as the church kept the situation in the inner cities and its recommendations to address the problems present in the media for days, thus raising awareness of the crisis in inner cities across the country.

<sup>105</sup> Archbishop of York J. Ebor, 'Philosophical shift in cities report', *Times*, 17 Dec. 1985, 11. Other examples of letters to the editor written by clergy include M.T.H. Banks, 'Inner-city priorities', *Times*, 4 Dec. 1985, 15; Archdeacon D. Hayward, J.T. Watson and R. Giles, 'Inner-city priorities', all in *Times*, 5 Dec. 1985, 17; J. Wellington, 'Inner-city priorities', *Times*, 10 Dec. 1985, 11; K.B. Cresswell, 'Inner-city priorities', *Times*, 14 Dec. 1985, 9.

<sup>106</sup> J. Garnett, 'No need for schism on inner cities', *Times*, 7 Dec. 1985, 9.

<sup>107</sup> Sir D. Lane, 'Inner-city priorities', *Times*, 9 Dec. 1985, 7. Further letters from politicians: Hunt, 'No need for schism', 9; Lord T. Beaumont of Witley, 'Inner-city priorities', *Times*, 11 Dec. 1985, 15; MP Field, 'Compassion', 11.

<sup>108</sup> Lane, 'Inner-city priorities'.

<sup>109</sup> Giles, 'Inner-city priorities'.

<sup>110</sup> R.E. Pahl, 'Inner-city priorities', *Times*, 12 Dec. 1985, 15.

<sup>111</sup> On One Nation Conservatism, see P. Dorsey, *British Conservatism: The Politics and Philosophy of Inequality* (London, 2011), 49–110.

<sup>112</sup> Similarly argued in Filby, *God*, 175.

<sup>113</sup> For a debate on the 'neoliberality' of Thatcher's urban politics, see Saumarez Smith, 'Action'.

<sup>114</sup> Lambeth Palace Library (LPL), Runcie/MAIN/1987/385, Runcie papers for 1987, ACUPA: general papers and correspondence, G.A. Brand, Progress Report on National Issues: December 1986. Similar conclusion in LPL, Runcie/MAIN/1987/384, Runcie papers for 1987, ACUPA: Pat Dearnley, *FITC – One Year On. A Personal Report to the Archbishop*.

## Inner-city debates in the religious field

In addition, *FITC*'s publication initiated a lively debate about the situation of the inner cities and its residents, urban policy and the church's life and mission in the religious field, and not only in the affected areas: the debate also occurred at a national level. The Roman Catholic archbishop of Liverpool, Derek Worlock,<sup>115</sup> was among the strong supporters of *Faith in the City*, while Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, who defended self-help, contributed a strong dissenting voice to the debate.<sup>116</sup> However, most figures in the religious field reacted positively towards the report, as did the C of E overall, despite the intense debate that took place about *FITC* at all levels of the organization. The majority of bishops openly supported its contents and in particular advocated for greater church commitment to creating social change.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, numerous church committees responded positively to the report.<sup>118</sup> Notably, the report received overwhelming approval from the General Synod that met in London from 4 February 1986 with broad press coverage.<sup>119</sup> The Synod debated *FITC* for two days, determining the church's conclusions and implications in the process. A few Synod members expressed criticisms – such as the Conservative MP John Strokes, who was 'dismayed' at the exaggeration characterizing the report – but they found little support.<sup>120</sup> The Synod merely noted that the report had insufficiently dealt with the spiritual side of the church and therefore called for 'further examination of the opportunities for the Church to fulfil its evangelistic mission' in the inner cities.<sup>121</sup> In the end, the Synod unanimously adopted the report and declared it the church's official policy.<sup>122</sup>

In addition, debate about *FITC* and the issues raised therein continued within the church on other levels. Church actors organized numerous follow-up conferences and published a large number of follow-up publications with a variety of thematic emphases.<sup>123</sup> The church-related, Christian press also reported positively,

<sup>115</sup>Longley, 'Church defends', 1, 36; van Hattem, 'Findings'. Colin Marchant made a positive appraisal of *FITC* from a free church perspective in the *Third Way* magazine, 9 (Jan. 1986), 14–16.

<sup>116</sup>I. Jakobovits, *From Doom to Hope. A Jewish View on Faith in the City* (London, 1986).

<sup>117</sup>Brown and O'Sullivan, 'Turbulent priests'.

<sup>118</sup>See the replies of numerous boards and councils in: CERC, ACCM/ACUPA/2/2, Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry (ACCM), Faith in the City Follow-Up Group, 1986–89, Patrick Dearnley, Faith in the City Follow-Up, 30 Jun. 1988.

<sup>119</sup>For the General Synod and politics, see G. Ecclestone, 'The General Synod and politics', in Moyser (ed.) *Church and Politics*, 107–27.

<sup>120</sup>C. Longley, 'Runcie praises church report on inner cities', *Times*, 6 Feb. 1986, 1; W. Schwarz, 'Runcie welcomes Baker aid for cities', *Guardian*, 6 Feb. 1986, 3.

<sup>121</sup>C. Longley, 'Synod backs cities report', *Times*, 7 Feb. 1986, 32.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*; C. Longley, 'Inner cities report backed by Runcie', *Times*, 6 Feb. 1986, 2.

<sup>123</sup>E.g. LPL, G637.A7F2 [P], Faith in the City, the challenge to the nation: report of a conference to follow up (May 1987); Runcie papers for 1988: ACUPA, 1987–88, memorandum, 25 Nov 1988; 'Faith in the City': three years on, ACUPA Conference at London Colney, 30 Nov. 1988; Housing People, Church Housing Association responds to Faith in the City (1986); LPL, G637.C4 [P], Faith in the City: the church and minority ethnic groups: a report by the Standing Committee (1986); CERC, PB 077, Church & Community Work, a response to 'Faith in the City' from a Working Party of the Social Policy Committee (1988).

supportively and extensively on *FITC*.<sup>124</sup> This ensured that the contents of the report were widely disseminated within the religious field.

Limiting the discussion to English cities was clearly criticized in the House of Commons by MP Nicholas Fairbairn, who stated that *FITC* 'has nothing to do with Scotland',<sup>125</sup> and was also overcome in the religious field. The church subsequently addressed the situation in the inner-urban areas of Scotland and Wales too, organizing conferences and releasing publications on the subject.<sup>126</sup>

*FITC* also had extensive consequences for the C of E itself in relation to its organizational structures. Archbishop Runcie appointed Patrick Dearnley as an officer for 'urban priority areas' to co-ordinate the follow-up tasks at the national level<sup>127</sup> and all dioceses followed, establishing posts for UPA link officers in their areas. Many diocesan and local working groups were set up to investigate the situation more intensively, expanding their knowledge and enabling them to design specifically tailored local actions.<sup>128</sup> Local 'sequels' to *FITC* were produced in struggling areas such as Birmingham and Blackburn<sup>129</sup> but also in 'one of the rich dioceses', the diocese of Winchester. Winchester's report outlined a strategy for its small number of UPAs as well as how the diocese could support other UPAs in the country.<sup>130</sup> Dioceses also contacted their MPs and local authorities to exchange information about *FITC*, through both one-off conferences and regular meetings.<sup>131</sup> Many dioceses also urged their congregations to at least consider the report,<sup>132</sup> and the findings and recommendations were also discussed at the level of deaneries and parishes.<sup>133</sup> For this reason, the Board of Education produced the study guide *It's for You*, which aimed to support non-UPA parishes in their discussion of the report 'on poverty and deprivation'.<sup>134</sup> A free copy of the guide was sent to each Anglican parish and an additional 45,000 copies were sold.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>124</sup>Amongst others: *Church Times*: 'Urban areas report stoutly defended against its critics', 6 Dec. 1985, 1, 'Urban Priority Areas – what the report says', 6 Dec. 1985, 10–11, 'Big debate', 13 Dec. 1985, 1; *Church of England Newspaper*: 'Leaked report', 6 Dec. 1985, 1, 4, 'Praise drowns', 13 Dec. 1985, 1, 15; *Third Way*, 9 (Jan. 1986).

<sup>125</sup>Hansard, Inner Cities, 11 Dec. 1985.

<sup>126</sup>O'Brian *et al.*, *Faith*; CERC, PB 087, Church in Wales, Board for Mission Division for Social Responsibility, *Faith in Wales. Part I: A Challenge of Faith. A Response to the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, 'Faith in the City'*, 1988.

<sup>127</sup>LPL, Runcie/MAIN/1988/499, Runcie papers for 1988: ACUPA, 1987–88, memorandum, 25 Nov. 1988.

<sup>128</sup>Dearnley, *FITC – One Year On*; G.A. Brand, *ACUPA Follow-Up Summary of Diocesan Reports*, 1 Apr. 1987.

<sup>129</sup>*Faith in the City of Birmingham. An Examination of Problems and Opportunities Facing a City. The Report of a Commission Set Up by the Bishop's Council of the Diocese of Birmingham* (chairman: Sir Richard O'Brian) (Exeter, 1988); 'Lancashire deprivation', *Church of England Newspaper*, 27 Jul. 1986, 5.

<sup>130</sup>CERC, PB 158, *Responding to 'Faith in the City'. A Call to Action in the Winchester Diocese. Report from the Diocese of Winchester's Working Party to Consider the Report of the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas* (1987).

<sup>131</sup>CERC, ACCM/ACUPA/2/1, ACCM, Faith in the City Follow-Up Group, 1986–89; Farnell, *Faith*.

<sup>132</sup>Brandt, *ACUPA Follow-Up*.

<sup>133</sup>Dearnley, *FITC – One Year On*.

<sup>134</sup>CERC, PB 072, C of E. Board of Education, *It's for You, Follow-Up to Faith in the City* (1986). Similarly: *Discovering Faith in the City. A Pamphlet for Those not Living in UPAs* (1988).

<sup>135</sup>LPL, G637.A7, C of E. General Synod, *Living Faith in the City: A Progress Report by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Advisory Group on Urban Priority Areas* (1990), v.



Although we cannot know how often the report was actually read, the enormous sales figures provide an indication. According to the C of E, 20,000 copies of the report had been sold by 1990.<sup>136</sup> The shortened, popularized version published by Christian Aid was even more widespread with 66,000 copies sold.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, organizations such as Church Action on Poverty and the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission put forward proposals for workshops and biblical debates on the issue to inform the discussion at the ecclesiastical base, that is in local congregations and church-based grassroots groups.<sup>138</sup> From the church hierarchy's perspective, the reception went very well. They were satisfied with the fact that numerous church members had been informed, sensitized to and engaged with the situation in the inner cities.<sup>139</sup> In the local religious fields, however, FITC was also at times criticized, in particular, for its lack of ecumenism and appreciation of the commitment of other churches.<sup>140</sup>

In response to the internal church debates and implementation of the report's recommendations, the C of E also established new organizations to support and campaign for people living in the inner cities. Most prominent among them was the Church Urban Fund (CUF) established in 1987 to raise funds to support local church projects in UPAs.<sup>141</sup> However, we still have little historiographical knowledge about these local discussions, church initiatives and projects in inner-city neighbourhoods, and further research is required to examine the impacts and effects on the ground, especially given the church's continuing decline.

### 'To stay, serve, and witness' – conclusion

*Faith in the City* – thanks, in part, to the inadvertent promotion by the Thatcher government – succeeded in putting the situation of inner cities and urban policies back on the media and political agendas in the mid-1980s. Moreover, the report introduced the topic into the religious field and in doing so generated attention for the situation of inner-city inhabitants in churches in the affected areas as well as throughout rural and suburban Britain. The C of E repeatedly referred to the problems and needs of the inner cities and renewed its criticism of the urban policies in follow-up reports such as *Staying in the City* (1995),<sup>142</sup> in which the C of E emphasized that 'to stay, serve and witness in the city then is of the very essence of the Church'.<sup>143</sup> However, these subsequent statements and church

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup>*Third Way*, 9 (Jan. 1986), 'Group studies', 18–20.

<sup>139</sup>G. Neale, "Faith" strikes a chord in the church', *It's for You*, 1.

<sup>140</sup>E.g. Manchester Local Archives, GB127.M512/1/23/1, Greater Manchester Churches Ecumenical Council (GMCEC), Standing Committee, minutes and reports, 1984–86; minutes of the Greater Manchester Industrial Mission Council, 19 Feb. 1986; minutes of the GMCEC, 3 Mar. 1986; J. Gustone, Ecumenical Officer's Report, 3 Mar. 1986.

<sup>141</sup>For CUF and its effects, see Filby, 'Faith', 152–7.

<sup>142</sup>C of E, *Living Faith* (1990), *Staying in the City: Faith in the City Ten Years On* (1995), *Faithful Cities: A Call For Celebration, Vision and Justice* (2007).

<sup>143</sup>C of E, *Staying*, vii.

publications had a notably smaller reach and made less impact on the public debate.<sup>144</sup>

The positive and hopeful resource-oriented view of inner cities, their inhabitants and their potential that *FITC* introduced into the nationwide political debate had a more long-term impact. The report questioned the negative labelling of inner cities, which was then widespread among social scientists, urban planners and politicians, particularly within the conservative government, as well as the common othering of inner-city inhabitants. It prepared the ground for a differentiated understanding and enabled more political empathy with the residents. The report can, therefore, be viewed as an early turn away from Thatcherite condemnation of inner-city residents, the exclusively negative ‘urban crisis’ narrative and the stigmatizing external view of British inner cities and their inhabitants. These more sympathetic, community-focused approaches eventually became politically effective in the 1990s through the New Labour urban policies<sup>145</sup> that realized the idea of local partnerships promoted by *FITC*.

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<sup>144</sup>Besides the follow-up-reports, e.g., urban bishops published an election appeal in 1987. CERC, Runcie/MAIN/1987/384, Runcie papers for 1987; W. Schwarz, ‘Pulpit for the poor’, *Guardian*, 16 May 1987, 21.

<sup>145</sup>G. Schmidt, *Urban Governance zwischen Inklusion und Effektivität. Lokale Partnerschaften in Labours integrierter Stadtteilentwicklung* (Wiesbaden, 2014).

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