

EDITORIAL

It was with pleasurable anticipation that 104 members of the Society arrived at Church House, Westminster on a Saturday in March to hear the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, who had flown down specially that morning from Edinburgh to be with us. Our enjoyment in listening to his wide-ranging knowledgeable and witty address on matters concerning Church and State (page 201) was delayed by traffic problems experienced by him en route and the Chairman had to make use of his management skills (not for the first time in the Society's history) by standing the day's agenda on its head! But we were most appreciative of the Lord Chancellor's presence and, in particular, his readiness to answer questions about his role in the ecclesiastical field and the friendly way he responded to all those he was able to meet during our usual relaxed lunch break.

However, whilst reflecting on Philip Petchey's impressions of the day (page 211) and Nicholas Richens's report of the AGM (page 213), I was struck by how much has to be got into our ecclesiastical pint pot at our day conferences in London. May I urge members who have views about conference patterns to write to the Journal as, even after seven year's existence, The Society's life-style is not set in stone!

Nevertheless, we do intend to continue with our residential conference every other year. Having begun at Cambridge in 1987, it is no doubt about time we paid a visit to Oxford as we indeed shall from 31 March to 2 April 1995 when we meet at Magdalen College to discuss the effect of Henry VIII's break with Rome and its significance for us today (page 200). This is a real opportunity for members to grapple with some serious historical and theological issues which have shaped the Church of England's course ever since, with implications for the Church's identity in what is now often referred to as the post-Christian age. As Dr Felicity Heal pointed out in an article in the *Church Times* on 13 May: "Historians are fond of dramatic upheavals in our interpretation of the past: it maintains our academic adrenalin and produces exciting debates." (You can tell us afterwards if this is so!) "Few such seismic shifts in recent years have been as important as the attack on prevailing readings of the English Reformation." We shall be led in our studies at Oxford by Professor R. H. Helmholz, who is coming from further afield than Lord Mackay, namely, from Chicago where he is, among other things, Dean of the Law School. We shall also have some domestic episcopal insight on this important subject, especially its relevance for the Church in its present day situation. Dr Heal's article contains references to what would constitute a useful reading list for our winter evenings. She will take part in the Conference.

As well as our conferences, our Working Parties make important contributions to the Society's life. The present groups were referred to in the July 1993 issue of the Journal where the names and addresses of conveners will be found (1993 3 *Ecc LJ* 130). The current topics are Establishment, Peculiars, Legal Education and Civil Preliminaries to Marriage; additional members will be welcomed. A first report of the Working Party on Peculiars will appear in the next issue of the Journal and it is hoped to publish a preliminary report of that on Civil Preliminaries to Marriage in January 1995. Experience has shown that it is no good just setting up a Working Party on a selected topic in the hope that leaders will materialise. The decision to set up a Working Party must come from members themselves but we have no doubt that issues and topics will suggest themselves

and lead those concerned about them to take action in this way. It would be helpful, however, if would-be conveners considering the formation of a Working Party, would get in touch with the Chairman who can give useful advice on procedure and publication. He can also ensure that publicity is given to the Working Party's existence in the Journal and at conferences.

There are also now a number of areas, e.g. London where local meetings are being organised for members of the Society resident and working there. Please let me know if you are engaged in such activities so I can make them widely known through the Journal.

An established aim of the Society is to strive for excellence in our understanding of canon and ecclesiastical law and it is indeed heartening to know how many members of the Society have already embarked on the LL.M. Course so successfully organised by Dr Norman Doe from Cardiff. George Spafford's letter (page 265) speaks eloquently of the value of this course. As well as Chancellor Spafford, Oswald Clark, Jeffrey Gainer, Brian Hanson, Mark Hill, Hughie Jones, Rhidian Jones, Steve Kirk, John Masding, Bill Pritchard, David Sherwood and Jonathan Redvers-Harris have now completed their courses and other members of the Society are taking part in subsequent courses. Dr Doe says that all places for 1994-95 and 1995-96 have been taken up and that only a few remain for 1996-97. I am sure this stimulating and satisfying experience is something many of us will wish to consider taking up.

One field in which some members may wish to offer their skills in the service of the Church is that of education in ecclesiastical and canon law for students at theological colleges and those undertaking post-ordination training. Legal input into their courses has been sadly neglected in recent years and it is good to know that some real interest is at last being shown by those concerned for training potential and actual members of the clergy. Members may be able to offer assistance by affording instruction in the fields of canon and ecclesiastical law in connection with courses taking place in their local areas. Anyone interested in taking part should get in touch with Chancellor Rupert Bursell, 74 Church Road, Winscombe, Avon BS25 1BP.

May I remind members that David Harte (3 Grosvenor Villas, Jesmond, NE2 2RH) would be very pleased to hear from those who would like to acknowledge their debt to their *alma mater* by presenting bound volumes of the Journal to their university or college library.

While membership of the Society now stands at over 450, there are always losses as well as gains. Do please respond speedily to the subscription reminder sent herewith to ensure that your membership is kept up and to make things easier for the Treasurer. We are anxious to ensure that the Society becomes even more widely known and supported. Quite a number of young barristers and solicitors have joined recently and the Society is well supported by Chancellors and Registrars. However we would welcome greater representation among Bishops, Cathedral Chapters, and indeed by Archdeacons who have an important role to play in legal affairs affecting parishes and the clergy. They are also of course now involved in the administration of the faculty jurisdiction. Please look around you and see if there are those who could benefit from and make a valuable contribution to the Society's life. Details regarding membership can be obtained from Peter Beesley at 1 The Sanctuary, Westminster, SW1P 3JT.

As members will be aware Archdeacon Hughie Jones has succeeded Archdeacon David Scott as Executive Officer and is now responsible for liaison with the printer to ensure that the Journal comes out in time and in good order. Both he and I and I am sure all of you would like to express our gratitude to David Scott for all the work he did as Executive Officer. In particular he gave invaluable service to the Society by laying down the pattern for getting the Journal assembled, proof read and printed from which we continue to benefit.

Finally, a revised list of members will be published in January 1995. Would you please let the Membership Secretary, Nicholas Richens (also of 1 The Sanctuary) know if your entry in the current list requires any amendment. If you could supply your telephone number, that would be helpful in enabling members to get in touch with each other as occasion arises.

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Editorial Committee: Michael Goodman (Chairman), Timothy Briden, Rupert Bursell, Norman Doe, David Harte, Hughie Jones, Raymond Hemingray, Peter Moore, David Scott, Thomas Watkin.

Editorial Advisory Committee: Bishop Eric Kemp, Professor John Baker, Professor David McClean and Fr. Robert Ombres, O.P.

OXFORD 1995

<i>Where?</i>	Magdalen College
<i>When?</i>	31 March - 2 April
<i>Theme?:</i>	From Henry VIII to Today (The break with Rome and its consequences for Anglican identity)
<i>Speakers?</i>	Professor R. H. Helmholz Doctor F. Heal The Lord Bishop of Birmingham Doctor G. Evans

Book the dates NOW.

Applications soon.