

EDITORIAL

Lawyers, and especially ecclesiastical lawyers, have never exactly been ‘flavour of the month’ so far as General Synod is concerned! There have always been complaints about the ‘unnecessary’ involvement of lawyers in the affairs of a body committed to spiritual things and about the cost of paying for their services. Not that General Synod has done much to repeal or modify existing Statutes or Measures requiring the services of lawyers and has continued to pass new Measures which, I would suggest, necessarily give rise to the need for legal expertise. Even when General Synod voted to abolish the ‘expensive farrago of legal gobbledegook’ involved in the confirmation of the election of a diocesan bishop, its will was thwarted by the House of Commons!

The fact that the Church of England is involved in legal procedures which affect not only regular worshippers but every citizen in the land, is because ours is a church “established according to the laws of this realm under the Queen’s Majesty” (Canon A1). Recently there has been renewed debate regarding the special position of the Church of England and, in particular, the parson’s freehold.

It is therefore timely that our one-day Conference on 28th March (see note on page 267) is to be devoted to this topic and the related question of ecclesiastical discipline, the topicality being heightened by the fact that the Conference is being held at the Church’s ‘headquarters’ at Church House Westminster!

Chancellor Rupert Bursell has written a stimulating and thought-provoking introduction to this Conference (page 259) and members will be given an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of the freehold and to express their views as to how things might be better managed if it is to remain, possibly in a modified form. We look forward to seeing you there.

As Archdeacon Scott mentions (page 258) this is the tenth issue of the Journal and the Editorial Committee has been heartened by the contributions from members who have been quick to respond to our request for learned and interesting articles over the past four and a half years. Please continue to do so. I should also be glad to receive suggestions from members as to the future format and content of the Journal, and to receive ‘Letters to the Editor’. Sadly only one so far! Come on, you can do better than that!!

Indeed one topic which should produce a response is the second instalment of the Spafford Working Party’s Report on Statute Law Reform (page 305). It has been produced as a discussion document with a view to consolidating some of the Statutes and Measures contained in Halsbury’s Statutes 4th ed. Vol 14. It is a stimulating and thought provoking contribution which suggests how out-moded and sometimes moribund legislation might be revitalised and updated in the light of changes that have taken place over the centuries. A third instalment will be included in a subsequent issue.

I should add that the views expressed in any article, review or other publication in this Journal do not necessarily accord with those of the Editorial Board or the Society as a whole.

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