

## *Gender and Establishment: Parliament, 'Erastianism' and the Ordination of Women 1993–2010*

JUDITH MALIBY

### **Introduction**

In July 2010, following the May general election, the General Synod of the Church of England welcomed a new ex-officio member, the long-serving Conservative MP for North Oxfordshire, Tony Baldry, as the Second Church Estates Commissioner. One of the responsibilities of this office in the larger British parliamentary eco-system is to steer through the lower house legislation approved by Synod. The Commissioner is also to answer questions from Members of the House of Commons on matters concerning the established Church. The membership of the Second Church Estates Commissioner both in the Commons and General Synod is one concrete expression of the relationship between parliament and the Church of England.

In his maiden Synod speech in July 2010 Baldry reminded the Church of England's bishops and elected representatives of the importance of that relationship to the debate about the consecration of women to the episcopate. After declaring his unqualified support for the consecration of women as bishops, Baldry reminded Synod that, whatever form the synodical measure eventually took, it would need parliamentary approval to become law: 'Church legislation is considered in the Commons on a free vote, which means the views of individual MPs matter.' He commented further that the mind-set of parliament, and the country, had changed considerably since the 1993 parliamentary vote to ordain women as priests, stressing that 'the equality agenda has strong support across all main parties'; he continued, 'I have to advise Synod that it would be a difficult enough task in this new context to explain why the Church has thought it necessary to make provision for those with theological difficulties about women's ordination.' He did not wish to imply that such a task was

Judith Maliby

impossible, and emphasized the importance of the Church of England as a 'broad Church', but it should 'be under no illusion about one thing: a difficult task could well become impossible if I had to steer through the House of Commons any Measure which left a scintilla of a suggestion that women bishops were in some way to be second-class bishops'. He saw the debate faced by Synod that July and in the next few years as less about first principles and more about the constraints and conditions under which women bishops might exercise episcopal ministry in the established Church. Anticipating the eventual arrival of a synodical measure for parliamentary approval, Baldry added 'whatever future changes Synod does or does not make to the draft legislation, therefore, in my view it is crucial that it confers the same legal authority and responsibilities on women diocesan bishops as on their male counterparts'.<sup>1</sup>

The Second Church Estates Commissioner was being a critical friend to Synod and gently reminded it of some recent history. Parliament is not and has not been a 'rubber stamp' for Church affairs and his reference to the changed culture over the 'equality agenda' from the early 1990s was a coded way of saying that the same 'Erastianism' that brought about greater concessions to opponents of women priests in 1993, would now in the 2010s manifest itself in parliamentary support for legislation which was gender-neutral on the subject of women bishops. In other words, the process by which a Church measure becomes an act of parliament has not changed: just as MPs had played a major role in securing *greater* concessions for opponents to women's ordination in 1993, now the majority of MPs of all main parties would balk at voting into the law of the land legislation which differentiated between bishops of the established Church on the basis of their sex. The same Erastian relationship which had helped to launch Flying Bishops in the early 1990s, might very well be brought to bear to ground them for good in the 2010s.

Baldry's maiden speech was informed and nuanced – not so some responses to it. Making his final speech to Synod before resigning as Bishop

1 10 July 2010. *Report of the Proceedings General Synod, July 2010 Group of Sessions*, (hereafter RPGS), vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 1, 98–9. I am grateful to Jane Freeman, Linda Kirk, Simon Sarmiento and especially Gill Sutherland and William Whyte for their comments on this essay.

of Durham, Dr Tom Wright specifically singled out the new Second Church Estates Commissioner for criticism: 'I certainly do not agree with him [Baldry] when he said "The political wind is blowing this way. Therefore we had better get in line".' Baldry had said nothing of the kind and it was a misrepresentation, whether deliberate or not, of his point that what had changed were the views of parliamentarians on equality issues – what had *not* changed was parliament's constitutional role in Church governance.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Synod greeted the bishop's remarks with applause and gave Wright even greater applause for his final rhetorical flourish: 'The day the Church ceases to be able to say that we must obey God rather than human authority will be the day it ceases to be the Church.'<sup>3</sup> At one level, this is a statement impossible for any Christian to disagree with. At another level, it indicates a degree of ignorance of the historic relationship between Church and State that is a little breath-taking. There is no need to refer back to the Elizabethan Settlement, the repeal of the Test Acts, or even the Prayer Book crisis of 1928–9 to see this. The reality of parliament's influence in the affairs of what remains the established Church is well illustrated by an examination of its considerable role in the ordination of women over the past two decades.

Wright's caricature of Baldry's remarks that the Church 'had better get in line' with the State reflects a current recourse among Church of England leaders to selective anti-erastianism. It has been a feature in recent years whenever the Church's lack of sympathy, let alone compliance, with the values underpinning equality or employment legislation, or the 'notion' of human rights, has been used as a critique of the Church's own behaviour. The term 'Erastian' is loosely used now as a way to describe a belief in a State-dominated Church, and is a long way from its intellectual father Thomas Erastus and its Reformation roots. In the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth century, the issue concerned the location of the ultimate authority to excommunicate erring members of the Church. Erastus, friend of Heinrich Bullinger and based in Zurich, favoured the civil magistrate. John Calvin,

- 2 10 July 2010. RFGS, 41:2, p. 99. Baldry was an MP in 1993 and voted for the ordination of women as priests in late October 1993. Hansard, HC, 29 October 1993.
- 3 12 July 2010. RFGS, 41:2, pp. 1, pp. 276–7. Wright's speech and Synod's reaction is available on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUJgVHSayo&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUJgVHSayo&feature=player_embedded) (Accessed 1 February 2011). I am grateful to Simon Sarmiento and Hilary Cotton for these references.

fighting hard in Geneva for the Church's independence from the civil authorities, placed the power with the Church's consistory courts. In this sense, even the Tudor Church of England is not 'Erastian', as the Church courts retained authority over excommunication.<sup>4</sup> There is, however, a tradition of episodic anti-erastianism in the Church of England, largely, though not exclusively, from the Oxford Movement in the 1830s onwards.

In his 2010 Synod speech, Bishop Wright presented the relationship between the established Church and parliament as a contest between 'human authority', which in this case is presumably parliament represented by the Member for North Oxfordshire and 'God' – by which, one supposes, the bishop meant General Synod, or perhaps more likely the House of Bishops. For all Churches, but for an established Church in particular, the location of the border crossing between human and divine authority is a thing difficult to discern with any precision and in many ways represents a flawed ecclesiological paradigm. As Bishop Peter Selby has remarked of English Anglican criticisms of the American Episcopal Church, 'the fact is that we who criticise T[he] E[piscopal] C[hurch] for collusion with its surrounding culture represent one of the most successfully enculturated churches in Christendom'.<sup>5</sup> The extent of parliamentary involvement in the ordination of women in recent decades is one indicator of that enculturation. This chapter seeks to make a contribution to our understanding of establishment by using the recent history of the ordination of women as a case study to explore the relationship between parliament and the Church of England over the past two decades.<sup>6</sup>

- 4 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), pp. 355–6.
- 5 Peter Selby, 'When the word on the street is resist', lecture given on 7 October 2009 and available at <http://www.inpaintings.com/When-the-Word-on-the-Street-is-Resist-Peter-Selby-7b0f1dc>.
- 6 The ordination of women in the Church of England has a considerable history before the 1970s and was actively discussed and debated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Brian Heeney, *Women's Movement in the Church of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Sheila Fletcher, *Maudie Royden* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

### The Ecclesiastical Committee and the 1993 Act of Synod

In November 1992 the measure to ordain women to the priesthood achieved a two-thirds majority in all three houses of the General Synod.<sup>7</sup> It was the culmination of nearly twenty years of work, which included referral to the grass-roots of church government in deanery and diocesan synods. In 1990, 38 out of 44 dioceses voted in favour of the ordination of women as priests. It is important to be clear about the precise contents of the 1992 Measure and its subsidiary financial compensation Measure and what was not. In 1992 the main provisions of the Measures (henceforth the Measure) were as follows:

1. The ordination of women as priests but not on the same basis as men.
2. The explicit exemption of women clergy from any protection in law provided by the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act.
3. Resolutions A and B, giving parochial church councils (PCCs) the right to prohibit the appointment of a woman priest to a benefice and to forbid any female priest from providing any sacramental ministry in that benefice whatsoever.
4. The explicit exclusion of the ordination of women to the episcopate.
5. A guarantee that no bishop opposed to the ordination of women would be forced to conduct such a service.
6. Financial provision for clergy who felt they must leave the priesthood because of their conscientious objection to the ordination of women, a provision which could be taken up at any time during the next ten years.<sup>8</sup>

It is notable that there is no mention whatsoever of Provincial Episcopal Visitors, or 'Flying Bishops', as they became known. That is because PEVs

7 The voting figures were 75% (bishops), 70.4% (clergy) and 67.3% (laity). Margaret Webster, *A New Strength, A New Song: the Journey to Women's Priesthood* (London: Mowbray, 1994), p. 212. Despite these figures, some commentators still insist on describing the two-thirds majority in each house as a 'narrow margin', e.g. Colin Podmore in *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), p. 133, an official Church of England publication.

8 A fuller description and analysis can be found in my 'One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, but Two Integrities?', in Monica Furlong (ed.), *Act of Synod – Act of Folly?: the Episcopal Ministry Act 1993* (London: SCM Press, 1998), pp. 42–58.

were not part of the original package of provision for opponents of the ordination of women hammered out in a process which lasted from 1975 to 1992. The system of PEVs was not subject to the same scrutiny and testing: it was produced in under twelve months – a rare example of the speed at which Synod could move when something was felt to be of sufficient importance.

### Manchester Statement January 1993

After the passage of the Measure, the House of Bishops met in Manchester in January 1993 to ponder its implications. Meanwhile, the Ecclesiastical Committee of both Houses of Parliament met in the spring to assess whether it was 'expedient' to send the Measure to both Houses for debate and a vote.

In my earlier analysis of the 1993 Act of Synod, I saw the House of Bishops as principally responsible for the invention of Flying Bishops.<sup>9</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, the story is more complicated but the view that the Act was a product of a process largely internal to the Church remains one widely held. In a collection of essays published in 2004, contributors with differing views on the ordination of women, but all supporters of the Act of Synod, paid virtually no attention to the influence of parliament. Mary Tanner, Paul Avis and Christopher Hill saw the creation of the Act as largely internal to the Church. In Tanner's analysis, the delay provided by the deliberations of the Ecclesiastical Committee was chiefly useful because it provided the bishops with more time for reflection and the refinement of the January *Manchester Statement*.<sup>10</sup> Examination of the records

9 Malby, 'One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, but Two Integrities?', pp. 51–8.

10 See the contributions by Mary Tanner, 'The Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod in Context', Paul Avis, 'Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993: a "Bearable Anomaly"?', and Christopher Hill, 'Reception and the Act of Synod', in Paul Avis (ed.), *Seeking the Truth in the Church: Reception, Communion and the Ordination of Women* (London: T & T Clark, 2004). Tanner noted that pressure from the Ecclesiastical Committee did have some consequences, but her narrative puts the House of Bishops in the driving seat (p. 68). Hill discusses the theological idea of reception without any reference to the particular circumstances of establishment or the participation of parliament. Colin Podmore's narrative of the events surrounding the ordination of women to priesthood omits entirely any mention of the Ecclesiastical Committee and barely refers to parliament at all. Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, pp. 124–33. An exception was the Rev. Stephen Trott, an ardent

which vocations to the priesthood of women deacons were to be discerned was explained. It appears that many bishops were concerned to avoid putting women deacons (some with experience of accredited and ordained ministry going back decades) through a humiliating and expensive selection process and with ensuring that no diocese in the Church of England would not have at least a few women priests working within it. There was further clarification on additional provision for opponents of women's ordination and an explicit statement that opposition to the ordination of women would not be a bar to ordination in the future. The dominant characteristic of this first Manchester Statement was the concern of the bishops with themselves as a 'college'. How were opposed clergy to be treated in a diocese with a 'pro' bishop; how were women deacons and priests to be treated in a diocese with an 'anti' bishop? And even more importantly in the minds of the bishops: how was collegiality to be maintained once the ordination of women as priests moved from the theoretical to the actual? The Measure made provision for 'no-go' parishes for women clergy; the bishops were clearly concerned to avoid the de facto creation of 'no-go' dioceses. It seems reasonable to conclude that part of the bargaining that went on behind the scenes in January 1993 concerned securing the agreement of opposed bishops to allow women priests to function in their dioceses, even if the ordination of these women had to take place outside diocesan boundaries or be conducted by another bishop acting under the diocesan's commission.<sup>12</sup> With this grew the notion that 'pro' bishops would ensure that opposed clergy would have access to episcopal pastoral care from a bishop of their own 'integrity'. The Manchester Statement was responsible for mainstreaming the idea of 'two integrities' inside one church.

The consensus at this point, however, seems to have been that such pastoral arrangements would be largely provided by existing suffragans and neighbouring diocesan bishops, and not by the creation of 'bespoke' bishops whose sole purpose for existence was the sacramental and pastoral care of opponents of women priests. The possibility was raised in the January

12 Such arrangements were made. In Sheffield Cathedral in 1994, for example, the ordinations of women priests were conducted by the retired Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, while the diocesan bishop was present but did not take part.

of the parliamentary side of the story, however, shows that the Ecclesiastical Committee played a major role in constructing the final package of provision for opponents of the ordination of women.

The events of 1993 illustrate the interrelation of the 'human authority' of the UK's parliament and England's established Church. In January the House of Bishops met in Manchester and its members appear to have been collectively shell-shocked by the significance of the decision made by Synod two months before. Despite strong support for the ordination of women among the majority of bishops, the mood apparently was fretful and fearful and the discussion focused largely on the pastoral care of those opposed to women in the priesthood and the survival of collegial relations within the English episcopate. The Roman Catholic commentator Clifford Longley offered the following assessment:

The majority of bishops do genuinely regard the approving of women priests as one of the best things the Church has done this century. But while the debate was on, they minimised their enthusiasm so as not to antagonise their opponents, including those among their fellow bishops. Their temptation now, out of habit, is to minimise what happened on 11 November [1992], when in truth the time has come to maximise it. There is no risk that they might further alienate the traditionalists, who are now well beyond being placated by mere words.<sup>11</sup>

Even so, the House of Bishops decided to try to minimize rather than maximize the opportunities presented by Synod's decision.

The first Manchester Statement in January (a second would follow in June) by the House of Bishops had unanimous consent. The process by

opponent of the ordination of women. He argued for direct parliamentary intervention to make greater provision for those opposed, including the setting up of a Royal Commission to redistribute church property. See his 'The Function of the Ecclesiastical Committee of parliament with particular reference to the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1992', *Churchman* 107 (1993), pp. 6-23, here pp. 13, 15, 20-3. Jean Mayland noted pressure from the Ecclesiastical Committee for further concessions but describes an almost fatalistic mood among the bishops following the 1992 vote in favour of women priests. Jean Mayland, 'Act of Betrayal', in Monica Furlong (ed.), *Act of Synod - Act of Folly*, pp. 59-75, here p. 67.

11 Clifford Longley in the *Daily Telegraph* (1 January 1993) cited in Webster, *New Strength*, p. 192.

Manchester Statement of using Provincial Episcopal Visitors appointed by the archbishops but the clear preference in the document was for diocesan bishops to make their own provision on a regional basis; the bishops suggested that PEVs should come from existing suffragans who would continue to serve the wider diocese and not simply a special interest group within it. Yet despite the emphasis on the pastoral needs of the opponents to women priests, the bishops collectively, and officially, gave no consideration to the idea that the pastoral relationship between a priest who is a woman and a bishop who thinks she is nothing of the kind might also be problematic in terms of pastoral care.<sup>13</sup>

#### *The Role of the Ecclesiastical Committee March–July 1993*

It is often said that parliament is not a 'rubber stamp' in church matters and few things illustrate that as well as the fact that the nearly thirty strong Ecclesiastical Committee met eleven times to deal with the two Measures sent from Synod in the first half of 1993: the first concerned the primary issue of the ordination of women as priests and the second addressed the financial compensation package for male clergy who wished to resign on the grounds of conscience. Four of those meetings were with representatives from the General Synod and a fifth (5 July 1993) also included testimony from both archbishops. The Commons members were all men; the members from the Lords included three female peers. In April and May, the then Bishop of Guildford, Michael Adie and Professor David McClean of the House of Laity, as the prime movers of the Measure, were interrogated with remarkable aggression by the Committee. The Committee also took the unusual step of inviting witnesses opposed to the Measure – a departure from normal practice. No women clergy were invited to appear before the

13 Webster, *New Strength*, pp. 192–3; the text of the January 1993 Manchester Statement is reproduced in *Reports of the Ecclesiastical Committee upon the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure and the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure*, Ecclesiastical Committee 203rd and 204th Reports, HC 895 (27 July 1993), pp. 21–3. See especially §§–13. In retrospect, the statement: 'In making such provision we do not and we cannot accept the theological reasoning behind the view that in some way those bishops and priests who participate in the ordination of women to the priesthood, thereby invalidate their sacramental ministry', looks over-optimistic (§11).

Committee to assist its deliberations and on only one occasion, the lay theologian, Dr Christina Baxter, did a woman appear at all before a committee considering the ordination of women.<sup>14</sup>

The proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Committee show that the bulk of its attention was focused on safeguards for the opponents of women priests. The Labour MP Frank Field was adamant that it was part of their 'function as parliamentarians ... to protect the interests of constituents who may be adversely affected by a [Church] Measure ... we are quite rightly ... much concerned with, and will no doubt spend much time on, how the position of minorities is protected'.<sup>15</sup> The Conservative John Selwyn Gummer was concerned that no man in the future could agree to be bishop of a diocese 'in circumstances where ... an ordination took place which he believed to be faulty'.<sup>16</sup> There was much concern expressed by parliamentarians that the promotion prospects of men opposed to women priests would be impaired. The Rev. John Broadhurst, appearing to represent those opposed to the Measure, agreed with Gummer about the difficulties facing such an individual:

An [episcopal] opponent of the ordination of women to the priesthood has to be willing either himself or by his licence to appoint and to ordain [a woman priest] otherwise he will contravene the law. It is rather like saying there is nothing to stop a vegetarian provided he is willing to eat meat. I think there are no rights, for anybody opposed to the ordination of women, to preferment unless they are willing to act either first or second hand.<sup>17</sup>

The Liberal Democrat Simon Hughes, like Field a supporter of the ordination of women, reminded Broadhurst that there was no 'right' to preferment, but reassured him that the Measure made it explicit that it 'will not be illegal for there to be sex discrimination against a woman in respect of

14 The Rev. John Broadhurst and Mr Peter Bruinvels, members of General Synod, appeared to speak against the main Measure. Baxter appeared before the Committee on 5 July 1993. *Reports of the Ecclesiastical Committee*, pp. 63–4, 134–5.

15 *Reports of the Ecclesiastical Committee*, p. 64 (19 April 1993).

16 *Ibid.*, p. 68 (19 April 1993).

17 *Ibid.*, p. 87 (11 May 1993). Broadhurst later became the Bishop of Fulham, a type of PEV for London Diocese. In 2010 he resigned his Anglican orders in order to join the Ordinate initiative of Benedict XVI. *Daily Telegraph* (1 January 2011).

her ordination, giving of a licence or permission to serve or officiate'.<sup>18</sup> Baroness Seear, who made almost the only mention by a Committee member in the entire set of meetings of the cost and pain that would have been incurred if the Measure had been defeated in Synod, was also concerned to protect the feelings of opponents.<sup>19</sup>

It was this focus on the protection of the opposed minority, almost to the exclusion of everything else, which helps make sense of events. In the first meeting with witnesses on 19 April, the idea of an Act of Synod, absent from the Manchester Statement but alluded to briefly by the Bishop of Guildford at the end of his statement to the Committee, was leapt upon by Lord Holderness.<sup>20</sup> The January Manchester Statement was simply not enough: 'a pious declaration with no force of law' declared the Conservative MP Patrick Cormack; further protection was needed in the form of an Act of Synod.<sup>21</sup> The message was getting through to the Church representatives, and Professor David McClean began his second day of testimony by dangling the prospect of an Act of Synod before the Ecclesiastical Committee.<sup>22</sup> PEVs were discussed and the legal status of an Act of Synod – that it would not need to come to parliament for approval – was explained by McClean.<sup>23</sup> By its meeting on 17 May, obtaining an Act of Synod, with additional protection for opponents beyond the provision made by Synod in November 1992, had become the main concern of the Committee. Field pressed McClean and Philip Mawer, the General Secretary of the General Synod, on the progress being made on such an Act by the House of Bishops. Mawer informed the Committee that a draft Act of Synod, which would include the creation of Provincial Episcopal Visitors (PEVs), would be presented to the House of Bishops meeting in June, although he made it clear that PEVs would function only under the authority of the diocesan

18 Ibid., p. 87 (11 May 1993).

19 Ibid., pp. 70–1 (19 April 1993).

20 Ibid., pp. 67, 70 (19 April 1993).

21 Ibid., p. 76 (19 April 1993).

22 Ibid., p. 83 (11 May 1993).

23 Ibid., pp. 85, 88 (11 May 1993).

bishop.<sup>24</sup> Both Field and Gummer were adamant that simply being a male priest or bishop was not enough to minister to opponents. Parishes which had passed Resolutions forbidding the appointment of a woman priest, remarked Field, must be protected against a bishop who would 'wear them down by presenting a male priest who was actually in favour of the Measure'.<sup>25</sup>

On 24 May, the Committee turned its attention to the second synodical Measure, providing financial compensation for clergy opposed to the ordination of women. The Measure was to have a life of ten years – sufficient time, for clergymen to decide whether their consciences were compromised so severely by the existence of women priests that they needed to resign from the Anglican priesthood. The ten-year period was an attempt by Synod to give clergymen unhappy about the 1992 vote time to experience ministry in a Church of England with women priests. The proceedings for 24 May suggest that certain parliamentarians were convinced of the General Synod's inability to get anything right. On one hand, they maintained the financial package was not generous enough; it did not compensate non-stipendiary clergy, sector ministry clergy (e.g. NHS chaplains, HM Forces chaplains), ordinands in training, or lay employees of the Church such as organists unable to play at a Eucharist celebrated by a female priest. On the other hand, it was argued that the provision was *too* generous and, with figures being aired of up to 4,000 clergy leaving over women priests (a figure provided by opponents, as Professor McClean noted), the Committee was agitated that it would bankrupt the Church and impair its ministry to the country. The then Second Church Estates Commissioner, Michael Alison MP, apparently driven by exasperation into irony, pointed out the considerable short-term savings on stipends that the resignations of 4,000 clergymen would bring.<sup>26</sup> McClean and Mawer were forced to admit that no one knew what the final bill would be because no one yet knew how many

24 Ibid., pp. 103, 104 (17 May 1993). See also pp. 105–6. The text of the June

Manchester Statement of the House of Bishops, including the 'Bonds of Peace' and the 'Draft Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993', can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 24–32.

25 Ibid., p. 103 (17 May 1993). Gummer made the same point about bishops wearing down Resolution parishes by appointing men in favour of the ordination of women (*Ibid.*, p. 107 (17 May 1993)).

26 Ibid., p. 113 (24 May 1993).

would take up the package.<sup>27</sup> Patrick Cormack, who maintained both that the financial provision was not generous enough and was also going to bankrupt the Church, remarked: 'So the person in the pew will pay for the woman in the pulpit and the man on the dole then?' To which McClean retorted, 'and of course the person in the pew voted in favour of this Measure'.<sup>28</sup>

By the time the Ecclesiastical Committee met again in July to vote on the two Measures, the House of Bishops had produced a second Manchester Statement, known as the 'Bonds of Peace' which detailed an Act of Synod with the provision of a new 'Resolution C', allowing parishes to opt out of the pastoral care of their diocesan bishop and put themselves under a PEV. Archbishop George Carey assured the Committee that the Act would pass Synod at its meeting in November 1993 and that the House of Bishops had 'gained a great deal from the discussion which has already gone on in your Committee, which has helped us in the House of Bishops ... to understand a little more some of the dilemma of people [sic]'.<sup>29</sup> The Ecclesiastical Committee voted on 12 July 1993 that both Measures were 'expedient' and should be sent to parliament.<sup>30</sup>

#### *The House of Commons Debate, October 1993*

When the Measure finally made its way to the Commons in late October 1993, a cross-party group of male MPs could not contain themselves from informing the House of the role they had played in ensuring that bishops

27 The total payout has been estimated at £27.5 million and involved roughly 440 stipendiary clergy, with possibly as many as 70 retired and non-stipendiary clergy. Around 70 men returned to the Anglican ministry. On this, see: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/churchstats2003/leaversowl.pdf> (accessed 21 October 2010). I am grateful to the Rev. Lynda Barley for this reference.

28 *Reports of the Ecclesiastical Committee*, p. 122 (24 May 1993). There is a puzzling remark from Broadhurst about office expenses augmenting the income of clergy in that point of view' (*Ibid.*, p. 122 (24 May 1993)).

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 127 (5 July 1993). Only one member of the House of Bishops dissented from the June Manchester Statement, John Austin Baker, Bishop of Salisbury. Webster, *A New Strength*, p. 194.

30 For the main Measure, the vote was 16 to 11; on the secondary financial provision Measure, the vote was 17 to 10. *Reports of the Ecclesiastical Committee*, pp. 55-6.

untainted by association with women clergy would be provided by the Church. Frank Field, Simon Hughes (supporters of the ordination of women) and Patrick Cormack (an opponent) all told the Commons of the key role they had played through the Ecclesiastical Committee in ensuring that additional provision for opponents of women priests was secured from the Church beyond that already in the Measure. As we have seen from the examination of the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Committee above, the concessions in the Measure, such as resolutions A and B and the explicit exclusion of women from the episcopate, were not enough for these advocates of minority rights. Field told the House: 'The Ecclesiastical Committee ... spent most of its time considering how that group [of opponents] should be protected.' Field found the Church of England uncooperative: 'the information that Synod [could] pass such a measure [like the Act of Synod] had to be extracted from Synod witnesses and it was almost like getting blood out of stone'. He added:

The starting point for enshrining the rights of the minority did not, therefore, kick off in the best possible terms. I hope that the House will consider carefully what further measures may be necessary at some later date to protect the right of the minority who disagree with the Measure [to ordain women].<sup>31</sup>

The Liberal Democrat, Simon Hughes, also declared that the 'Committee insisted on extra protection for those who will be in a minority in the Church if the Measure is passed'.<sup>32</sup> And continuing this example of cross-party harmony, Patrick Cormack told the House that the Ecclesiastical Committee had decided that 'while we would recognise the theological differences, we would not become bogged down in them, but would concentrate on the safeguards issue'. He continued:

We did precisely that. It is partly, if not largely, a result of cross-examination in that Committee that we had the promise of the Act of Synod. That it was incorporated in the second Manchester statement, which came to be known as 'Bonds of Peace'.<sup>33</sup>

31 *Hansard*, HC, 29 October 1993, 1098, my emphasis.

32 *Ibid.*, 29 October 1993, 1115.

33 *Ibid.*, 1129, my emphasis.

The language of 'protection' and 'safeguarding' was carried from the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Committee to the floor of the Commons. To this, Tony Benn responded:

There is one other matter that I find offensive ... I found it offensive to be told that the House need not worry because there will be safeguards for male priests against ordained women coming into their parishes. Safeguards? My God! – what sort of man wants a safeguard in case a woman gives communion in his parish?<sup>34</sup>

Nearly twenty years later, in the changed culture over issues of equality, it seems worth asking how Field and Hughes now regard their championing of some male clergy as needing 'protection' and 'safeguarding' from priests who are women. There is less uncertainty about the position of Patrick Cormack. Speaking in June 2006, Sir Patrick was adamant that Synod should always have the first say in church law. 'The Synod', he said, 'should decide what Measures it wishes to introduce without any shackles or interference.' Nonetheless he went on to say:

During my 36 years in this place – for 35 of which I have served on the Ecclesiastical Committee – Measures introduced by the Church of England have on occasion been contentious. One thinks of the Churchwardens Measure 2001, in respect of which the House played an important and constructive part and of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, *where as a result of what the Ecclesiastical Committee said*, safeguards were built into the Church of England's legislation to protect traditionalists: the Act of Synod. So there is a very real role for the Ecclesiastical Committee and for this House.<sup>35</sup>

34 Ibid., 1110. The debate in the Lords took place on 2 November 1993. The main Measure passed the Commons 10:1 and 7:1 in the Lords.

35 'Third Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation', Hansard, HC, 27 June 2006, my emphasis. The Churchwardens Measure would have given bishops the right to deprive a churchwarden of his or her office 'apparently at will'. As Monica Furlong observed 'just occasionally a bit of state interference can offer a useful intervention'. Monica Furlong, *CofE: the State It's In* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), p. 256.

The proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Committee bear out the interpretation of the influence of parliament in church affairs given by Field, Hughes and Cormack to the House of Commons. This *parliamentary* committee, a mere 'human authority', had a direct effect on the shape of the provision made by the *Church*. It illustrates nicely that no one wishes to be called an Erastian but many are willing to be Erastian to achieve a desired outcome.

### Parliament and Women Bishops 2002–2010

Having established that parliament played a crucial role in ensuring that greater provision was made for the opponents of women's ordination than had been approved by Synod in 1992, it is time to revisit Tony Baldry's remarks to Synod in July 2010 about a changed parliamentary context in terms of the 'equality agenda'.<sup>36</sup> What evidence is there to support the claim of the new Second Church Estates Commissioner?

Given the standard rhetoric about 'secular Britain' we should be surprised to find MPs and Peers expressing any interest at all in Church affairs.<sup>37</sup> However, a search through Hansard from 2002 to 2010 produces on average several results per year for the term 'women bishops'. In the first decade of the century, the subject was approached chiefly through Early Day Motions (EDMs), a failed Ten Minute Bill in 2006, and was a recurrent topic in Commons questions to the Second Church Estates Commissioner. It is striking too, given the presence of the spiritual peers in the House of Lords, that questions and comments about women's ordination in the last decade occurred overwhelmingly in the lower house. This may reflect the fact that MPs unlike Peers have constituencies and that these contain women clergy serving local communities within them. In 1993, Frank Field stressed the duty of MPs to protect their constituents unhappy with the prospect of women priests; ten years later MPs are much more concerned with their

36 See above, pp. 98–9.

37 The 'secular Britain' thesis is nicely criticized in the introduction to Jane Garnett, Matthew Grimley, Alana Harris, William Whyte and Sarah Williams (eds), *Redefining Christian Britain: post 1945 Perspectives* (London: SCM Press, 2006), pp. 1–18.

responsibility to support women clergy, sometimes serving in deprived localities, within their constituencies.<sup>38</sup>

*Early Day Motions (EDMs)*

Early Day Motions are formal motions submitted for debate in the Commons. In fact, very few EDMs ever get debated. Chiefly, they publicize an MP's interest in a particular issue or campaign and provide evidence of parliamentary support for the issue raised.<sup>39</sup> In 2006 and 2008, women bishops were the subject of a number of EDMs. In June, July and November 2006, a series of EDMs congratulated the Episcopal Church in America for electing the Bishop of Nevada, Dr Katharine Jefferts Schori, as its Presiding Bishop. Jefferts Schori's election provided the opportunity for MPs to draw the contrast between an Anglican Church which had just elected the first female primate and the exclusion of women entirely from episcopal office in the Church of England, noting 'that ECUSA is the first Church in the Anglican Communion to elect a woman archbishop; and [parliament] looks forward to the day when the Church of England consecrates women bishops and archbishops'.<sup>40</sup>

General Synod debated the consecration of women bishops in July 2008 and in the period leading up to the Synod debate, there was another series of EDMs to highlight the issue and to demonstrate support more widely in the country. The following EDM gave notice:

That this House calls on the Church of England to remove all legal obstacles which at present prevent women from becoming bishops; and asks the Church to end this unacceptable form of discrimination against women clergy.<sup>41</sup>

Following the favourable vote in General Synod to take the next step on the laborious process towards women bishops in the established Church in early July 2008, a cross-party group of MPs put forward this EDM a few days later:

38 See Andy Reed's remarks below, pp. 118–19.

39 See <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/edms/> (accessed 15 December 2010).

40 EDM no. 2392, 28 June 2006.

41 EDM no. 1825, 17 June 2008.

That this House welcomes the vote at the General Synod of the Church of England in York in favour of the consecration of women bishops; and looks forward to its implementation as soon as possible.<sup>42</sup>

The following year (January 2009), EDMs shifted emphasis and became, in a sense, more directive towards the Church: 'That this House declares that candidates for the office of bishop should be considered on merit; and that sex is not a merit.'<sup>43</sup> The language that candidates for appointment as bishops by the crown should be on merit has been much favoured by MPs in the last few years.

*Debates*

The place of women in the established Church has cropped up at times in debates about other issues in the House of Commons. In February 2002, the Liberal Democrat MP Sandra Gidley (Romsey) tabled an EDM about the Church's exemption from the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act.<sup>44</sup> A month later she referred to her EDM in a debate on the status of women and human rights. After describing the case of a woman sentenced to be stoned to death in Nigeria for having a child out of wedlock, she went on to talk about the Church of England. Gidley reminded the House what her EDM had said:

This House notes the Church of England is exempted from the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 due to the attitudes and activities of a minority who are in disagreement with the ordination of women; affirms the need to strengthen and forward the movement against discrimination on the grounds of gender, [and] trusts the Church will thus be encouraged to catch up speedily with the vast majority of institutions.<sup>45</sup>

She expressed the hope that the next Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr Williams was enthroned in February 2003) would 'provide the perfect opportunity to forge leadership which would unite the Church of England

42 EDM no 1978, 8 July 2008.

43 EDM no 133, 14 January 2009.

44 'Gender and Equality in the Church of England' EDM, 14 February 2002.

45 Hansard, HC, 14 March 2002, 1085.

behind justice for women and end the unfortunate and embarrassing need for "flying bishops".<sup>46</sup> She went on to describe to the House a young woman's experience at a selection conference for ordination at which she was closely questioned on her childcare arrangements. The Member for Romsey wondered, rhetorically, whether young men were questioned about childcare arrangements at Church of England selection conferences. The woman was not recommended and it was felt it was due to the view of the selectors that she could not cope with children and the responsibilities of being a parish priest.<sup>47</sup>

The following year, in a debate about violence against women, the Labour MP Ann Cryer (Keighley) related the story of an honour killing of an Asian woman in Bradford. She continued, 'so that it is not thought that I always go on about Asian women and never speak about white women' and went on to talk about the Church of England. Cryer reminded the House of her EDM tabled on 25 February, which paid tribute to the life of the writer and Church feminist campaigner Monica Furlong, urged the government to amend the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act to remove the exemption of religious bodies, and called 'on the established church to cease forthwith its present discrimination against women priests and accept the need for women bishops'.<sup>48</sup> The Conservative Robert Key (Salisbury), of whom more a little later, expressed strong sympathy with Cryer's views but said that the Church was presently addressing that issue, and that it would be best for it to come to the House from Synod via the Ecclesiastical Committee.<sup>49</sup>

#### Parliamentary Questions

The subject of women bishops has also featured in parliamentary questions to Baldry's predecessor as Second Church Estates Commissioner, the MP for Middlesbrough, Sir Stuart Bell. MPs have often prefaced their questions on the timetable for women bishops with questions about the ratio of men to

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid. The Ecclesiastical Committee in 1993 had a lengthy discussion as to whether a woman vicar with children could properly fulfil her obligations as a parish priest. *Reports of the Proceedings*, pp. 107-8 (17 May 1993).

48 Hansard, HC, 6 March 2003, 1006.

49 Ibid., 1006.

women in training for the Anglican ministry. The expected answer comes – that there are more or less equal numbers of men and women in training. MPs active in using parliamentary questions in this way in the last five years have been cross-party and include Chris Bryant (Labour), Robert Key (Conservative), Sally Keeble (Labour) and Tony Baldry (Conservative).<sup>50</sup> The Liberal Democrat MPs Sandra Gidley and Simon Hughes have also spoken in support of women bishops.<sup>51</sup>

In the course of the past decade, parliamentary questions have conveyed an increasing sense of exasperation from MPs over the slow progress being made by the established Church on consecrating women to the episcopate. In December 2005, Robert Key, his patience perhaps running thinner since he had urged his colleague Ann Cryer in 2003 to let the synodical system take its course, asked the Second Church Estates Commissioner what Flying Bishops cost the Church (answer: £249,659 in 2004). Key acknowledged that deeply held views could not be reduced to financial figures, but hoped that the time had come for the move on women bishops. Bell, who was usually circumspect in his answers, reminded the House that there was a long synodical process (his favourite phrase when responding on this topic has been that the mills of God grind slow but fine), but added that 'I am always happy to refer to the Archbishop what I think is a strong wind behind that in the House'.<sup>52</sup>

Over time, the language used by MPs has become increasingly sharp. Chris Bryant asked Bell in 2006 to tell Synod 'on behalf of this House that we want women bishops as soon as is humanly possible and, for that matter, as is divinely possible'. And in reference to various schemes circulating at the time to constrict the ministries of women bishops, he added:

Will he [Bell] point out to the bishops that, although every one of them voted with the archbishops for the ludicrous apartheid system, seven of them have subsequently written personal, private letters to me saying that they will not

50 E.g. Hansard, HC, 13 June 2005, 2 February 2006, 5 June 2007, 20 March 2008.

51 EDM, 14 February 2002; Hansard, HC, 14 July 2008, 26. Hughes' comments were part of debate on the reform of the House of Lords.

52 Hansard, HC, 19 December 2005, 1557.

support those measures? Can we make sure that there is no apartheid on this issue and that women are treated equally in the Church?<sup>53</sup>

Further evidence of the erosion of patience comes from Key's question to Bell in 2008 concerning the number of women holding crown parochial appointments (answer: 103 out of 650). Key responded, 'There is clearly some way to go. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me that it really is time that the Church of England stopped discriminating against 50 per cent of the human race when it comes to episcopal appointments?' Key added, 'Can he imagine this House finding it expedient to agree to any Measure from Synod that sought to discriminate against women, in the hope that it was going to allow women bishops in the Church of England – but not at any price?'<sup>54</sup> Key also promoted a debate on sex discrimination and religious organizations on 11 November 2009 on the seventeenth anniversary of Synod's vote to ordain women as priests. He reminded the House that parliamentary approval was necessary before women could become bishops. 'That is, their votes matter as the Measure 'will have the force of statute law' and therefore the content of the Measure was very much the concern of the House.'<sup>55</sup> Following the most recent synodical vote on women bishops in July 2010, Tony Baldry answered questions in the Commons from MPs eager to see the Church move on the matter. He informed the House what he had told General Synod: 'I made it clear in York at the General Synod that I did not think I could get through this House any legislation in which there was a scintilla of a suggestion of women bishops in any way being second-class bishops.'<sup>56</sup> The parliamentary context for receiving a synodical measure on the ministry of women in the established Church had indeed changed significantly from 1993.

#### *A Ten Minute Bill 2006*

On 21 March 2006, the Labour MP for Loughborough, Andy Reed, introduced a Ten Minute Bill to amend the 1993 legislation for women

53 Ibid., 5 June 2006, 20.

54 Ibid., 8 May 2008, 833.

55 Ibid., 11 November 2009, 76WH.

56 Ibid., 27 July 2010, 865.

priests to encompass women bishops.<sup>57</sup> The bill would circumvent the synodical process and bring the issue directly to parliament for approval. It had started life in the hands of the high-profile MP Chris Bryant who withdrew his sponsorship upon becoming a minister. It had no chance of getting off the ground, but like EDMs, it was an indicator of parliamentary mood and a way of putting down a marker on the matter. Reed was well informed about the history of women's ordination and his speech was a very Anglican combination of pragmatism and theology.<sup>58</sup> Reed cited the great growth in women ordinands since the Synod vote in 1992. He reminded honourable members that every one of them would have women clergy as constituents, emphasizing the role they played in working with the vulnerable and needy in their constituencies. Reed claimed the high ground for his model of the parish priest, as he claimed it for the constituency MP: a responsibility to everyone in the parish or constituency regardless of whether they are 'your own' or not.<sup>59</sup>

For the purposes of the argument being developed here two points – apart from the fact that this Ten Minute Bill happened at all – are important. First, Reed emphasized that the Church of England exists to serve not simply its own members but the wider society, a sentiment he has not been alone in expressing. The contribution of the established Church to the larger local community is a defence of establishment often put forward by Church of England leaders themselves. Second, Reed's speech presented a complex set of positions on the relationship between parliament and the Church – more complex than Tom Wright's dichotomy between human and divine authority. Reed told his fellow MPs that they might be thinking that it was none of their business who the Church did or did not consecrate; he added that they probably thought that parliamentary questions to Sir Stuart Bell on behalf of the Commissioners were 'a quaint and irritating anachronism'. But he pointed out that such provision had allowed the House to question the

57 Ibid., 21 March 2006, 170–3; Ann Treueman, 'Parliamentary Sketch', *The Times* (22 March 2006). Like EDMs, Ten Minute Rule Bills 'are often an opportunity for Members to voice an opinion on a subject or aspect of existing legislation, rather than a serious attempt to get a Bill passed'. See <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/bills/private-members/> (accessed 15 December 2010).

58 Hansard, HC, 21 March 2006.

59 Ibid., 170–3. See Professor Elaine Graham's contribution to this collection.

Commissioners on 'their outrageous sale to the highest bidder of the Octavia Hill estate' in Vauxhall. He speculated that most Members probably did not think that they should tell the Church what to do on this issue.<sup>60</sup>

Up to a point, Reed agreed with them, but he saw the bill as 'a mechanism before us to make our views known in full'. Reed declared himself in favour of disestablishment but argued, as many did in the 1993 Commons debate on women priests, that as long as the Church is established, Members of Parliament have responsibilities that they simply cannot ignore. Since 1992, he reminded them, parliament had voted on no fewer than seventeen Church of England Measures. In short, Reed argued that parliament was not there unduly to interfere in the Church's decision-making processes, but neither was it a passive partner. As an illustration, he referred to the role of the Ecclesiastical Committee in 1993 in influencing the shape of the final settlement on the ordination of women priests – the same point made by Tony Baldry at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>61</sup>

The authorized organs of the Church of England did not like Reed's Ten Minute Bill one bit and an official statement remarked that 'The proposed Bill would be contrary to the long-standing constitutional convention that parliament does not initiate legislation on such matters'.<sup>62</sup> This official church view was queried by the then Bishop of Worcester, Peter Selby. Should Synod ever reach the point of passing a Measure to permit the consecration of women as bishops in the established Church, Selby commented:

Those opposed will certainly take their fight to the Ecclesiastical Committee if they don't like the Measure that comes from General Synod, and it is therefore very important that the Commons should have indicated its view for the [Ecclesiastical] Committee's guidance.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 170–3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 170–3.

<sup>62</sup> *Church Times* (10 March 2006). The MP Sir Patrick Cormack quoted a letter from the Bishop of Fulham 'who is the chairman of the very respected Anglican organization Forward in Faith' who wrote to him to ask him 'to be present in the Chamber to vote no' (*Church Times* (24 March 2006)).

<sup>63</sup> *Church Times* (24 March 2006). Also quoted in Reed's 2006 speech.

Selby was expressing anxiety about the role and influence of the Ecclesiastical Committee in determining the final shape of Church legislation. Robert Key, emerging in 2006 as the leading supporter in the Commons of women bishops without elaborate provision for their opponents, shared Selby's anxiety and raised the matter with Sir Stuart Bell in the 'quaint and irritating anachronism' of a parliamentary question. On 30 January of that year, Key asked Bell: 'What proposed measures from the General Synod of the Church of England have been rejected by the Ecclesiastical Committee as not expedient since 1981; and if he will make a statement.' Bell replied:

Since the Synodical Government Measure 1969, the Ecclesiastical Committee has not expressed the view to Synod that a Measure is inexpedient. In relation to a statement, there have been a number of occasions when the Committee has objected to aspects of a Measure, leading to the withdrawal and subsequent resubmission in a different form of the Measure in question.

The exchange is worth quoting in full.

[Key:] Does not that suggest that, when a two-thirds majority in Synod produces a request for legislation, the Ecclesiastical Committee's record is take it *with a light touch* and to respect the will of the majority in Synod, as might happen, for example, with the coming Measure on women bishops?  
[Bell:] As a member of the Ecclesiastical Committee, the hon. Gentleman knows that we are a long way from women bishops. Although it is true we have not declared any Measure inexpedient, two Measures – the Churchwardens Measure 2001 and the Church of England (Pensions) Measure 2003 – were sent back from Committee and returned in amended form. In 1984, the Appointment of Bishops Measure was actually turned down by the House after the Committee deemed it expedient.<sup>64</sup>

Selby and Key have both expressed concerns about the role of the Ecclesiastical Committee in influencing the final shape of church legislation, especially in matters to do with women's ordination.

<sup>64</sup> *Hansard*, HC, 30 January 2006, 15, my emphasis.

### Conclusion

Two of the most striking things about the events explored in this chapter, are first, that they happened at all and, second, the absence of any significant engagement with the parliamentary role in narratives of the ordination of women. The Ecclesiastical Committee's strenuous, at times aggressive, interrogation of the Bishop of Guildford and Professor David McClean in 1993 and the occasional but persistent interest by MPs in the ordination of women as priests and bishops in the past decade indicate that the links between parliament and the Church are far from 'residual' at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century. Perhaps the presence of the bishops in the House of Lords has meant that attention is more often focused on the Church's role in the affairs of the State – obscuring the State's role in the affairs of the Church.<sup>65</sup>

In terms of attitudes towards the 'equality agenda', the culture of the House of Commons, as in the country, has shifted considerably since 1993. To some church leaders, such as the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord George Carey and the Bishop of Winchester, the Rt Rev. Michael Scott-Joynt, the promotion of "tolerance, equality and fairness" has come 'at a cost of eroding Christianity as the foundation of British culture and society'.<sup>66</sup> However an alternative view could be that MPs, across the main parties, are taking their responsibilities seriously by stating that they will not vote into the law of the land discriminatory legislation about women bishops. MPs have consciences too and Christian clergy should be precisely the people to encourage them to use them. It is striking that a set of busy MPs clearly think the Church of England is worth taking an interest in; that they think it matters who its priests and bishops are; and that establishment is chiefly seen in terms of the Church's important role in local communities expressed through the parochial system and diocesan structures. What could be a matter for rejoicing from an Anglican perspective has led to cries of Erastianism from within the established Church. Yet the relationship has not

65 It is odd that the fact that the bishops' seats in the national legislature can only be occupied by men is largely absent from criticisms of the existence of the spiritual peers in the Lords. See R. N. Morris (ed.), *Church and State in 21st Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), p. 221.

66 *Daily Telegraph* (30 December 2010).

suddenly become Erastian. There is nothing new, as this chapter has demonstrated, in parliamentary influence in the matter of women's ordination. When such relationship works for a desired outcome, it is regarded as 'good' Erastianism; when it does not, it is 'bad' Erastianism. What it is not, is anything new in the long, complicated relationship between parliament and the established Church of England.

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# The Established Church Past, Present and Future

Edited by  
Mark Chapman  
Judith Maltby  
William Whyte



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## *Notes on Contributors*

**Andrew Atherstone** is Tutor in History and Doctrine at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

**Nigel Biggar** is Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at the University of Oxford, and Canon of Christ Church.

**David Carter** is a Methodist Local Preacher and Lecturer for the Open University and Wesley College, Bristol.

**Mark D. Chapman** is Vice-Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford and Reader in Modern Theology at the University of Oxford.

**Philip Endean SJ** is Fellow in Theology at Champion Hall, Oxford.

**Sarah Foot** is Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Oxford and Canon of Christ Church.

**Elaine Graham** is Grosvenor Research Professor in Practical Theology at the University of Chester.

**Matthew Grimley** is Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at Merton College, Oxford.

**Judith Maltby** is Chaplain and Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

**Iain McLean** is Professor of Politics at the University of Oxford

**Martyn Percy** is Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon and honorary Professor of Christian Education at King's College London.

Scot Peterson teaches politics at Balliol College, Oxford.

William Whyte is Fellow and Tutor in Modern History, St John's College, Oxford.

## Preface

SARAH FOOT

'Disestablishment' might not be the first answer an observant Anglican would give if asked to identify the most pressing dilemma facing the Church of England today. The essays collected in this volume show with some force, however, the continuing relevance of the establishment question even in this increasingly secular age. Three central issues dominate the discussion here: the monarchy and the role of the monarch as Defender of the Faith; implications for the churches of the reform of the House of Lords; and gender- and sexual-equality and the question of the consecration of female and gay priests to the episcopate. Behind them all lies one pressing question: in a liberal, humanist, multicultural state in which involvement in all forms of organized religion is sharply decreasing, what possible role can a church established in only one part of the United Kingdom play?

It cannot be coincidental that the instigators of the one-day conference from which these papers emerged are all historians, nor that they chose to invite another historian, holder of one of Oxford's 'established' professorial chairs (carrying with it a canony at Christ Church) to chair the conference and write this preface. Historical questions obviously surround the creation and the continuance of the Church of England as an established, national, state church. But are they not now merely historical questions? Has establishment genuinely preoccupied politicians, clergy or people at any time since the Prayer Book crisis of 1927-8? Matthew Grimley's paper asks why, when in the rest of Europe the ties between Church and State became much weaker in the first half of the twentieth century, the same did not happen in England (although the Irish and Welsh churches are disestablished, and the Scottish church has *de facto* disestablished). McLean and Peterson perhaps go the furthest of all the writers here to argue that the Church of England should disestablish, and on the Scottish model. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, most of the papers argue the reverse: that