

CONFERENCE REPORTS

THE EUROPEAN CONSORTIUM FOR CHURCH AND STATE RESEARCH

CARDIFF, 21–24 NOVEMBER 2002

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The Portrayal of Religion in Europe: The Media and the Arts

The fourteenth annual conference of the European Consortium for Church and State Research took place in Wales (Cymru), one of the nations of the United Kingdom, at the university located in its capital city Cardiff (Caerdydd). The hosting of the event was organised on behalf of the Consortium by the Centre for Law and Religion, at the Law School, working in collaboration with the University Chaplaincy at Cardiff. Papers were prepared and circulated in advance, and the delegates consisted of Consortium members, national reporters and invited guests. The conference was attended by thirty-five people representing the countries of the European Union.

The conference opened with a session entitled 'Practitioners' Perspectives', chaired by the Revd Gareth Powell, in which talks by Archbishop Peter Smith (of the Roman Catholic Church) and Mr James Carroll (Irish Consul) explored the work of the Central Religious Advisory Committee (CRAC). This is a secular body charged with the function of examining religious broadcasts: their preparation, quality, accuracy, and balance. Under the direction of Mr David Harte, the Consortium then discussed the work of the broadcasting standards commission, in particular, how it deals with broadcasting which misrepresents religion to the public or is overly critical or disrespectful of it. Experiences from around the European Union were shared. The remainder of the conference was devoted to the working sessions of the Consortium. There were three.

The first session, chaired by Sophie van Bijsterveld, dealt with the portrayal of religion in the written press. On the basis of the wealth of information contained in the extensive national reports, the discussion considered the legal framework (eg the degree to which the press is governed by laws or whether it is self-regulated), the social reality (eg whether press coverage is amicable or hostile to religion), and the dynamic (eg current or likely future developments) at work in the countries of Europe. The second session, chaired by Axel von Campenhausen, considered the fast-moving developments in the communication of religion on radio, television and the internet, an area which is experiencing very different approaches across Europe. The

final session, chaired by Gerhard Robbers, dealt with religion and the arts. Questions covered in this session included: when religious law requires change in, for instance, liturgical practice, does this produce conflict with civil law requiring conservation and protection of heritage? What financial benefits do religious organisations enjoy from state funding of the arts, and do these benefits cause problems for the state's posture in its relations with religious groups? And, are the limits of freedom of religious art less strict than those on freedom of expression through the press, radio and television?

The conference delegates also visited Cardiff Law School, where, at a reception, they heard about the work of the Centre for Law and Religion, particularly in the field of the *ius commune* of the Anglican Communion, the work of the Colloquium of Roman Catholic and Anglican Canon Lawyers (set up in Rome in 1999), and the work of the Centre's new forum for the study of law, sociology and religion in Europe. There was a dinner at Cardiff Castle, and delegates met informally, prior to dinner on the final night, the Most Revd Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Wales but soon to be confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury. Sponsors for the event included the Ecclesiastical Law Society, the National Assembly for Wales (through the Welsh Assembly Government) and Cardiff 2008 Ltd. The proceedings will be published in due course.

THE DURHAM RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE

4–6 April 2003

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The Ecclesiastical Law Society's residential conference on the weekend of 4 to 6 April 2003 was held at St John's College, Durham, under the title 'Safeguarding the Sacred in Society: The future role of the national church'. The aim was for the speakers to have a free range in identifying major issues for the ongoing relationships of the Church of England with the state and with society.

As Professor David McClean warned, much of the public discussion of 'establishment' focuses narrowly on 'the more picturesque aspect of our unwritten constitution' which may be categorised as 'high establishment', but the 'earthed establishment' of church work, particularly within the changing legal framework of the geographical parish and in chaplaincies, is more fundamental. Generally, the legal framework within which the Church of England operates and possible directions for its future development may be better understood by comparing the manner in which the Church is dealt with in other contexts. Thus Professor McClean referred to the experiences