

***Church and State in 21st Century Britain: The Future of Church
Establishment* R.M.Morris (ed.) Palgrave April 2009**

**Launch Seminar 15 June 2009 at the Constitution Unit,
Department of Politics, UCL**

Speech notes

**Introduction: R.M. Morris, Honorary Senior Research Fellow,
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This book is about the politics of religion in Great Britain. It is offered as an

Roman Catholics – religious tests prevent the succession of a Roman Catholic

determination to provide a written constitution if it ever came about would spell the end of the Church's present constitutional position. Better to think ahead and be prepared than be forced to change at times other than of one's own choosing – and be forced to change at that asymmetrically, partially, possibly painfully and clumsily. Gordon Brown's decision in July 2007 to withdraw from real involvement in episcopal appointments typically illustrates what may happen. That is unilateral action, careless of the Church's feelings and reckless about the remoter consequences – which in this case included the removal of any remaining rationale for continued episcopal membership of the House of Lords where some planned, voluntary withdrawal would seem the right course.

There is more, much more I hope readers will find, about the issues covered in the book. For example, John Lucas has traced the disestablishments of 1871 and 1920 respectively in Ireland and Wales. Frank Cranmer has written a conspectus of church/state relations in Scandinavia, a region whose religious history has in many ways been closest to our own. With Marjory MacLean and Scot Peterson, he has also contributed a chapter on important and highly significant recent litigation in Scotland. Elsewhere, the book summarises the relevant law and practice (some of which may surprise readers unacquainted with it), investigates finance, and gives an account of the literature and data on secularization. At the end, the book endeavours to offer a description of the pathways that change might follow – the plumbing again. It will be for others, of course, to decide what if any steps to take, when and how. My hope is only that the book will be of some help in a process that seems bound to occur – whether passively or actively - and assist in equipping readers to address how politics and religion might be structured to relate to each other in the longer term.

Lastly, not the least of William Fittall's alert and helpful but impartial interest in the project has been his goodness in coming to act as respondent today. He will not, I imagine, be speaking *ex cathedra* and this will not be the place or time for conclusive reflections though he will understand that I and everyone else will be hanging on his every word.

R.M.M.
15 June 2009

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=76858>