

EDITORIAL

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The *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* is fortunate to have an Editorial Board with a breadth of practical and academic experience by whom it is loyally served but, with its membership spread throughout the globe, meetings are comparatively rare. It would have been churlish to allow the *Journal's* twenty-first birthday to pass without a celebration and, to that end, the Board met in March 2008 for a gala dinner at the Inner Temple, preceded by an arduous business meeting and a tour of the Temple Church conducted by its Master in pursuit of the elusive truth of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. Significant birthdays such as these provide occasions for reflection on the journey which has been travelled, and also for plotting a clear course for the way ahead.

As for the past, the meeting coincided with the publication of the Consolidated Tables and Index for Volumes 1–8 of the *Journal*, spanning the first two decades of the *Journal's* existence. This invaluable research tool is the product of painstaking work on the part of Peter Moore and is testimony to the enthusiasm and dedication of Michael Goodman, who edited the *Journal* from its inception in 1987 until he stood down in 2002. The Tables and Index reflect both the diversity and the depth of coverage that now exists in the field of ecclesiastical law and copies may be purchased from Canon John Rees, Treasurer of the Ecclesiastical Law Society.

Far older than this *Journal* are the records of the Court of Arches, a significant archive of ecclesiastical law, most of which date from the seventeenth century onwards, the rest having been lost in the Fire of London. On the dissolution of Doctors' Commons, this huge archive was dumped in a well. Having suffered the effects of damp, mould and vermin, the records were recovered and transferred to the registry of the Dean of the Arches at Lambeth Palace, whose Library has been working for decades to conserve this mass of material and to make it accessible. The latest project, concerning the series of libels, begins in April, supported by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust. A range of catalogues describe the records but these guides are difficult to use; thus the Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library are appealing for £357,000 to transfer all of the Library's catalogues to electronic format. This initiative will unlock a wealth of material arising from the court's jurisdiction – from seventeenth-century marriage and divorce to ritualistic controversies of the nineteenth century, extending across probate, defamation, manners and morals of the clergy and laity, and non-conformity.¹ In May 2008,

1 Phases One and Two are complete, and the resulting online catalogue is accessible on the Library's website at <www.lambethpalacelibrary.org>, accessed 7 February 2008. Phase Three, launched in

the Library is holding an exhibition on ecclesiastical law, which will be accessible to those attending the Ecclesiastical Law Society's London Lecture on 7 May, to be given by Dr Richard Palmer, the Librarian.²

As to the future, there is an immediacy in terms of the Lambeth Conference of 2008, which is drawing ever closer. An important aspect of the Conference will be consideration of a draft Anglican Covenant, commended in the Windsor Report (2004), formulated in terms of the Nassau draft (2007) and, following a process of consultation, now re-cast in terms of the St Andrew's draft (2008). The question of the Covenant has received particular attention in the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, which has forged strong links with the *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* in recent years. As guest editor, I have collated a special issue on the subject 'Communion, Covenant and Canon Law'. It will comprise papers by Professor Norman Doe and Dr Colin Podmore (which were first published in volume 10(1) of this *Journal*), together with others commissioned from Canon Gregory Cameron, Professor Christopher Seitz, Bishop John Hind, and Dr Andrew Goddard. The papers, which are accompanied by a number of book reviews of complementary texts, seek to inform the dialogue on Covenant from jurisprudential, ecclesiological and theological viewpoints. Copies of this special issue may also be obtained from Canon Rees and, thanks to a grant from the Ecclesiastical Law Society, each of the bishops attending the Lambeth Conference will receive a copy.

The Editorial Board, in conjunction with Cambridge University Press, will continue to promote the wider readership of the *Journal* within the United Kingdom and abroad. Whilst it will remain the definitive periodical concerning the legal regulation of the Church of England, its increasing international and ecumenical coverage has helped to establish an enviable reputation in comparative church law. This is reflected in the content of this issue, whose articles cover the interpretation of scripture in the canon law of the Church of England, and a critique of the legal issues facing faith schools in England and Wales, together with the revision of the constitution of the Church of Nigeria. In addition, there is comment on catholic procedures for the nullity of marriage, the concept of freedom of religion in Canada, and the interplay between religious organisations and sexual orientation discrimination legislation. As well as its other regular features, this issue includes an expansive summary of the work of Cardiff University's Centre for Law and Religion from its director, Professor Norman Doe. The Centre, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2008, has a long association with the Ecclesiastical Law Society, and with this *Journal*.

2008, focuses on the Court of Arches, and needs public support. Donations (payable to the Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library) may be sent to the Librarian, Lambeth Palace Library, London SE1 7JU.

2 Details of this and the other lectures in the series are to be found on the inside back cover of this issue.