



CONFERENCE REPORTS

## Porvoo Communion Church Law Symposium

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In recent years, the comparative study of church law—encompassing, in its broadest sense, church order and polity, canon law, and other regulatory instruments—has begun to make a significant contribution to Christian ecumenism. This development has been pioneered by the Centre for Law and Religion at the Cardiff University School of Law and Politics (CLR), and its director, Professor Norman Doe. In particular, the elucidation of legal principles (such as those common to the Anglican churches,<sup>1</sup> the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches,<sup>2</sup> and the Christian churches<sup>3</sup>) has been a characteristic feature of this field of study.

One grouping of churches whose law has not hitherto been studied in this way is the Porvoo Communion, a fellowship of Anglican and Lutheran Churches in Great Britain and Ireland, the Nordic region, Iberia and the Baltic countries.<sup>4</sup> These churches share many features of considerable legal, ecclesiological, and social interest: they are European, episcopally ordered, catholic and reformed, and in many cases their history includes establishment or very close links with the nation state in which they exist. It seemed, therefore, that the application of the method of juridical ecumenism to the Porvoo communion would promise

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<sup>1</sup> See Anglican Consultative Council, *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion*, 2nd edn (London, 2022). In his foreword to the 2022 edition, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby commended *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion*, calling them ‘absolutely essential as a point from which there can be greater development and discussion of church order’.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 331 to 334 of this *Journal* and preceding conference reports of the *Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers* in *Ecc LJ passim*.

<sup>3</sup> N Doe (ed), *Church Laws and Ecumenism: A New Path for Christian Unity* (Routledge, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark; The Church of England; The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; The Church of Iceland; The Church of Ireland; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania; The Church of Norway; The Lusitanian Church of Portugal; The Scottish Episcopal Church; The Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain; The Church of Sweden; The Church in Wales; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Abroad; and The Lutheran Church in Great Britain. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia has observer status.

both to build up mutual understanding and best practice among the member churches and also to advance a burgeoning field of legal scholarship. For this reason, the Porvoo Communion Church Law Symposium was formed at the CLR, consisting of academics, clergy, and lawyers, each with knowledge and experience of the laws and other regulatory systems applicable to one of the Porvoo Communion member churches. The initiative coincides with a call in 2017 from the Dr Erik Eckerdal, now Swedish Bishop of Visby, for a comparative study of church law in the Porvoo Churches.<sup>5</sup>

The topic chosen for the first year was 'Church and State'. The Symposium met monthly by Zoom. Papers were presented at each meeting, followed by discussion focused on the commonalities and differences between the laws of the churches. The papers were as follows:

- i. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark: Associate Professor Niels Valdemar Vinding, University of Copenhagen
- ii. The Church of England: The Rev'd Russell Dewhurst, Cardiff University (Anglican co-chair)
- iii. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland: Professor Pamela Slotte Russo, Åbo Akademi University
- iv. The Church of Iceland: Guðmundur Thor Guðmundsson, Church of Iceland Legal Office
- v. The Church of Ireland: The Rev'd Terence Dunlop, Chancellor of Armagh
- vi. The Church of Norway: Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Deputy Head of the Legal Department of the Church of Norway (Lutheran co-chair)
- vii. The Scottish Episcopal Church: Alexandra Plumtree, Committee on Canons, Scottish Episcopal Church
- viii. The Church of Sweden: Anna Tronêt, Diocesan Lawyer Uppsala, Church of Sweden
- ix. The Church in Wales: Charlotte Wright, Lawyer at Hugh James, Cardiff University
- x. The Lutheran Church in Great Britain: The Rt Rev'd Tor B. Jørgensen, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (until 2024)

Each paper gave a brief summary of the history of church and state in the national context, followed by a snapshot of the relationship between church and state in the present day. There were very many commonalities in that most (although not all) of the churches historically had very close links with the state, but constitutional change, growing religious pluralism, and a renewed theological belief in the right of churches to self-governance have led, in different ways, to a loosening of those links. Today, many of the churches face similar issues, such as developments in marriage law to encompass same-sex couples.

Even in its first year, the Symposium has shown that the work of ecclesiastical lawyers and legal academics across the Porvoo churches can be enriched by the

<sup>5</sup> E Eckerdal, *Apostolic Succession in the Porvoo Common Statement: Unity Through a Deeper Sense of Apostolicity* (Uppsala, 2017), available at <<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1129750/FULLTEXT01.pdf>>, accessed 14 May 2024.

method of juridical ecumenism. In the future, the Symposium hopes to make a contribution to wider ecumenical discourse and legal scholarship. It is also our ambition that in coming years the membership of the Symposium will grow so that the law of all the member churches of the Porvoo Communion can be included in our study together.

doi:10.1017/S0956618X24000310

## Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers

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The Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers met for the 22nd time in its history at St Stephen's House in Oxford from 26 to 28 September 2023 (a new venue for the colloquium). We were hospitably welcomed by Canon Robin Ward and the community at St Stephen's House, who provided an excellent venue for our gathering.

The Colloquium took its customary form with presentations from both the Anglican and Catholic perspectives on five aspects of a general topic, which on this occasion was 'the rights and duties of the clergy'. Each presentation was followed by lively discussion among the members of the colloquium. Our first session, looking at rights and duties arising from ordination was chaired by Chancellor Mark Hill KC; the Rev'd Raymond Baudon (Anglican Diocese of Southwark) presented a paper on the position of the ordaining bishop and addressed questions about lawfulness and validity of ordination, with particular reference to the complex question of divorced persons and ordination. Canon Andrew Cole (Diocese of Nottingham), who joined the Colloquium by Zoom, presented the Catholic perspective on the requirements for ordination and considered those rights and duties which arose from ordination itself rather than from office. This led into a discussion of the Catholic concepts of ordination and the clerical state, as well as an examination of possible Anglican analogues.

The next papers addressed the rights and duties of office holders, with special reference to appointment, which offered a contrast with those rights and duties which flow from ordination alone. The Rev'd Stephen Coleman (Diocese of London) and the Rev'd Robert Ombres OP (Blackfriars Oxford) presented papers on this theme in a session chaired by Professor Norman Doe. The papers considered the interaction of various parties in appointment and the particular role of the bishop alongside other possible participants in the appointment