

Editorial

Liturgical Uniformity and Identity

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In October SAGE Publications took over the publication arrangements for the *Journal of Anglican Studies* from Continuum. We remain grateful to Continuum for having initiated the JAS with the Journal of Anglican Studies Trust, but we now look forward to a bright future and continued development of the Journal with SAGE. The JAS Trust and the Editor look forward to working with SAGE to develop the Journal and to see it flourish in the service of the millions of Anglicans around the world. One benefit will be the availability of the Journal online from early next year (visit www.sagepublications.com).

The Latin tag *lex orandi lex credendi* ('law of praying – law of believing') has a long history in Christianity and especially so in Anglicanism. The tag can be read both ways: how we pray shapes what we believe, or what we believe shapes how we pray. Prayer is an expression of belief, and belief is what is expressed in prayer. Thus the liturgy of the Church, and our own lives of prayer, can be seen as the window through which faith is expressed and perceived. That is the way in which the Primates' pastoral letter from Brazil in 2003 spoke in responding to suggestions that rites to bless same-sex unions might be authorized in the diocese of New Westminster, Canada.

Authorization is a key concept in this debate: what is at stake is the official teaching and practice of the Church. The Primates saw that on this issue there was no possibility of general authorization for the lifestyle that such rites blessed. There could therefore be no support for the authorization of such rites.

There is another sense in which this 'law' operates. The habitual experience of the liturgy shapes the faith of the Christian person. What, therefore, each Christian prays, that Christian in time becomes.

Both these senses have been important in the history of the Anglican tradition, and are becoming increasingly crucial in contemporary experience. The Tudor revolution in England defined the faith of the nation by

means of state-enforced liturgical uniformity. But while there may still be some commonality, liturgical uniformity no longer exists in Anglican churches around the world.

This reality spreads across the Communion and within individual dioceses and at both levels the instrument of a single authorized liturgy to define and enforce the faith of the Church has been diminished if not lost. This loss is crucial in the struggle currently going on for the identity of Anglicanism and the character of the Anglican Communion.

That struggle is of such significance that this issue of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* is devoted to the loss of a single liturgically defined identity and other ways in which to approach the challenge of identity coherence. Colin Buchanan provides an overview of the liturgical problem and Bryan Spinks examines a particular example, the ordinals in ECUSA. Sam Wells offers an evocation of seventeenth-century Evening Prayer in a modern setting, while Wendy Dackson reminds us of the striking notion of sacramentality in the thought and life of the great Anglican layman, William Stringfellow. Charles Sherlock gives us a full review of the new *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of Ireland.

We begin this issue, however, with a comprehensive article from Ian Douglas on the nature of mission and community for Anglicans in the present times. This article extends work he has already published on this topic and points to a theological framework for the institutions and activities sponsored by the Communion to sustain a sense of global Anglican faith. In the process he draws attention to the forthcoming Anglican Gathering to be held in connection with the Lambeth Conference in South Africa in 2008. He highlights the significance of this Gathering for an understanding of Anglicanism and for an appropriate conception of Anglican ecclesiology. It is undoubtedly the case that this Gathering, and its predecessors in Minneapolis and Toronto, are of the utmost importance for the life and credibility of the Anglican Communion.

Understanding the nature of the Anglican Communion and Anglican faith are taken up in the two other articles. First, Stephen Pickard draws out an important aspect of Anglican faith in trying to resolve certain types of questions. He challenges the notion that all questions can be resolved simply. Rather, he suggests the decidability of the question needs to be fully recognized as part of the challenge. Tom Frame looks to make sense of the variety in global Anglicanism by drawing our attention to the work of Ernst Troeltsch on different kinds of religious groups.

These are very large and very important questions at the present time and hence have taken up the whole of this issue of the *JAS*. The series on Church and State, and the Conversation piece, will return in the next issue.