

EDITORIAL

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The long shadow of abuse committed by clergy and in churches is still cast over the Church. Evidence continues to emerge of failures of process that in turn can lead to allegations of a cover-up. Disclosure of a settlement of a claim raising allegations of abuse by George Bell, Bishop of Chichester from 1929 to 1958, came in the aftermath of the conviction of Peter Ball, sometime Bishop of Lewes and Bishop of Gloucester, for sexual offences and for misconduct in a public office. This raised the question of whether, and for what purposes, a bishop can be said to hold a public office. This in turn raises questions of the relationship between Church and state. In the *Comment* section of this issue, Frank Cranmer and David Pocklington seek to unpick the complexities of the definition of public office and, from another jurisdiction, Garth Blake SC comments on cases of sexual abuse in an Anglican children's home in Australia.

The courts of the Church of England are part of the court system of England and Wales and in this issue we mark a development in the reporting and citation of ecclesiastical cases with the introduction from 1 January 2016 of neutral citations for the ecclesiastical courts. Charles George QC, Dean of the Arches and Auditor, has written an introduction to his practice direction introducing the new method of citation, both of which may be read below. Elsewhere in this issue, Rupert Bursell QC completes his survey of oaths and declarations with a thorough examination of the Clerical Declaration of Assent and M H Ogilvie comments on a Canadian case on freedom of religion.

Much of the complexity that can be seen running through the pages of this issue comes from the reality that in a multi-cultural, heterogeneous society different systems of rules and expectations command the loyalty of individuals and groups of people. To put this into familiar jurisprudential terms, there are different 'sovereigns' vying to impose their will on the populace. In such a situation the concept of legal pluralism can be attractive. In the opening article of this issue Russell Sandberg casts a critical eye over this debate.

The *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* has a unique vocation as an international comparative journal of law and religion and as the in-house publication of the Ecclesiastical Law Society. The Society is a charity with an educational aim. The *Journal* fulfils this educational function in part, but over the years the Society has sought to encourage and resource teaching and training in canon

law within the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland and more widely. The Society's Education Adviser, Canon David Parrott, has written an introductory comment on this important area of the Society's work. Those of us who have a developed interest in the field need no convincing of the importance of knowledge of the law to promote good order in church and society and to protect the vulnerable. Many more, however, remain to be convinced.