

THE MEANING OF ARTICLE X OF THE APA CONSTITUTION

Introduction:

Article X is to be construed **restrictively**. Both its plain language, and its history and context (provided in White & Dykman's Exposition), demand a restrictive reading.

Part I: The Plain Language of Article X Mandates a Restrictive Reading

“Shall.” Article X states clearly that the BCP **“shall be in use”** throughout the Anglican Province of America- in every Diocese and in every Missionary District. “Shall” does not suggest anything other than its mandate for use.

Limits on Alterations. Further, Article X allows for “no alterations of or additions to” the BCP without the Synod following a process that takes years to complete. Further, any alteration that is made **“must conform to the Principles contained in the Preface of the Book of Common Prayer.”** This prohibition against altering in any manner the mandatory 1928 BCP, absent specific and stringent procedure, illustrates how seriously the APA takes not simply the use of the BCP, but its whole, unaltered, and correct use.

Preface to the BCP. Because any alterations made must confirm to the BCP's Preface, the language of the BCP's preface equally controls. The Preface to the BCP makes clear that in the worship of Christ, “different forms and usages may without offence be allowed, *provided the substance of the Faith be kept entire*” (v). Given that worship *is* the substance of the faith, no liturgy may at any point, no matter how small, suggest even the slightest change in doctrine. Further, the Preface assures that “this Church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England in any essential point of doctrine, discipline, or worship” (vi). This phrase becomes particularly important when we examine later the proviso regarding “special forms of worship.”

In short, the plain language of Article X requires the BCP to be the liturgy in use in every parish and every diocese. Any alteration to the BCP requires great procedural hurdles, and even then cannot be without clear boundaries- namely, it must conform to the Preface of the 1928 BCP. The plain language thus mandates a restrictive reading.

Part II: The History and Context of Article X Mandate a Restrictive Reading

In addition to the plain language of Article X, White & Dykman's Exposition makes clear that Article X is to be given a restrictive reading. White & Dykman must be given great deference; their two-volume set on the Constitution & Canons is the basic, authoritative reference on Anglican canon law in America. Because the APA Constitution is based upon this same historic canon law [ECUSA's Constitution], we in the APA know from White & Dykman exactly why, historically, this particular article was proposed, how it was argued and when it was accepted. We know its meaning- via its history and its context- and thus are not left to guess.

According to White & Dykman, *by virtue of the language “shall be used”* [or “shall be in use”], the Book of Common Prayer “becomes the **law** for every clergyman of the Church in conducting

public worship” (125-26). Indeed, the prayer book “**is** the formula of this worship,¹ and the rubrics being a part thereof are equally as binding as the rest” (126).

Indeed, so restrictive is Article X to be construed, and so serious is a clergyman’s deviation from it, that his failure to use the Book of Common Prayer as the formula for worship, given both its language and its connection to Article VIII, is a presentable offense:

The question arises, could such clergyman who omitted to use the Book of Common Prayer on occasions of public worship have been presented for trial for its non-use? If this article stood alone in its directions for the use of the Book of Common Prayer, it would seem as if he would not have been liable, but Article X must be construed in connection with Article VIII containing the declaration wherein he solemnly engages to “conform to the Worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America,” and as before stated, the Prayer Book is the formula of worship, and **failure to use this formula as prescribed would be a presentable offense**” (126).

Regarding the proviso allowing for “special forms of worship,” it is critical to understand its meaning via its context. This proviso was added in 1904; its intent was not to suggest that alternatives to the Book of Common Prayer are permissible for use. Instead, this proviso refers to needful services not covered by the Prayer Book, particularly to services involving future issues not yet anticipated. That this interpretation is correct is suggested by three things: First, after White & Dykman mention this proviso, they immediately proceed to describe the need of the newly-formed United States to change the Book of Common Prayer so that United States citizens no longer were praying for King George as their sovereign. Second, White & Dykman unflinchingly insist throughout this exposition, as discussed above, on the requirement to use the Book of Common Prayer and on the fact that not to do so is a presentable offense. Third, they give this proviso relatively minimal treatment, mentioning it only to remind the reader that such forms must be permitted by the rubrics of the BCP. All of this suggest that “special forms of worship” refers to special services that for whatever reason are not covered in the Book of Common Prayer.

Conclusion:

Based on this restrictive reading, mandated by the clear language and the history and context of Article X, neither the phrase “special forms of worship” nor the list provided at the end of the APA’s Article X may be interpreted as “starting points” or “examples” of other acceptable forms of liturgy. These portions of the Article must be restrictive as well; otherwise, it becomes entirely incongruent with the rest of Article X. A “prescriptive” reading invites canonical violation because it removes the fence, the palpable boundary, that the meat of Article X, the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer, and Article VIII, clearly construct. A “prescriptive”

¹ This “worship,” White & Dykman explain, is defined in the Solemn Declaration found in Article VIII of the Constitution [modified by the APA Constitution to apply to itself]: “I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Anglican Province of America.”

reading invites frolicking outside the bounds of the Book of Common Prayer to a field never envisioned by Article X or by the historical Anglican church.