

# News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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## Editorial

On 18 October, St. Luke's Day, my Principal, the Rev. Robin Nixon, died very suddenly whilst having coffee with overseas students here at St. John's College. I write nine days later, from a College rocked with the suddenness of it, saddened by the death of one who had become a dear friend to many in his three years at St. John's, and with the immediacy of his funeral (on 25 October still very fresh in our minds. I confine myself to describing his funeral as my personal contribution to *NOL* this month.

On Tuesday evening the hearse brought his coffin (specially made to accommodate his 6ft 7in length) to the College at 8 p.m., where Noel Ollard received it into chapel, and led a short service from the Series 3 provision to the evening before a funeral. After this the switches were arranged so that two lights only shone in the chapel, over the coffin, and the outer edges of our almost-square room were in relative darkness beside this pool of light. The chapel was locked, until I went in myself at 7 a.m., and it was then open during the morning for students to go in and out in quiet and pray, giving thanks for Robin's three years with us, and all his life and ministry, and upholding Ruth, his widow, and their three daughters in prayer. Then at 12.15 p.m. we had our College 'Farewell Service', to which outsiders were not invited, but only the community, including Robin's family, were present. We sang, we recited the Easter Anthem, I preached on Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders, we sang 'And can it be?'—and the roof lifted as the triumph of Christ's victory over death broke through the inevitable and very deep grief we all felt. We then took our leave of Robin's mortal body as the coffin was carried from the College on its way to Bramcote Church, and we sang 'Lighten our Darkness' (Series 3 version) to a College setting as we watched it go.

After a subdued lunch we walked to the funeral service in Bramcote Church, where guests from all round the country joined family, friends and College for the main service. Here we sang again, including Robin's own hymn (for St. John the Evangelist, marking his years at St. John's Durham and St. John's Nottingham) which we print on a later page. We ended with the reverberating 'Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it' which became the theme song of the Nottingham Congress last year. We also had solos by trumpet and violin before the service, and Bruce Kaye of Durham preached on the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 who lived as seeing him who is invisible—comparing Robin's own faith with that. And we then processed out into the new churchyard, and stood in a great semi-circle, hundreds strong, round the newly dug grave. For his body was to lie and await the resurrection here in Bramcote where his years as principal have been. The clergy, the bearers, the family, came slowly to the grave. Roy Williamson, Vicar of Bramcote and Archdeacon of Nottingham, committed the body to the ground. Then a trumpet sounded, and together we sang 'Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son'. Again, the note of triumph burst through our grief, and the apparent finality of the grave was shattered as our minds and spirits responded to the victory of Christ.

How can one *debate* liturgy, fresh from such experience? In so many ways the word of God combined with the power of the sheer events to lift us and comfort us and open our hearts to God the more. This is liturgy as I understand it, and the issues of the classroom, or the text-chopping of a Commission, or the politics of a Revision Committee, are worthless unless they serve such an event. The grief and the triumph intertwine together in the impact which remains with me now, and will, I trust, never leave me altogether.

Colin Buchanan

I should add that delays this month are due to this extraordinary emergency which completely disrupted my own agenda. I am now able to add that the St. John's College Appeal, which comes to its climax at the weekend 3-5 November, is now linked with the name of Robin Nixon, and the new building at St. John's will be his memorial. Friends who wish to pay tribute to his memory are invited to send gifts to St. John's College quickly. Meanwhile we would like to thank all readers of *NOL* who have undertaken to help the Appeal already, or who have sent in gifts. Our target is £130000—all in the one weekend (and we shall be opening letters and gift envelopes all the week following). Then on Friday 10 November at 1 p.m. there is a half-hour service of thanksgiving for the money given to the Appeal, and at 5.30 p.m. there is a Memorial service for Robin Nixon at All Souls' Langham Place, at which it is anticipated that the Bishop of Liverpool (the College President) will officiate. There will be a collection for the Appeal at this service, and our London friends, and members of General Synod (which finishes that day), and all who held Robin Nixon in honour, are warmly invited to attend.

## NEWS ON THE OFFICIAL FRONT

General Synod meets from 6 to 10 November, and the centrepiece of the week is the debate on the ordination of women on the Wednesday. For this there is one simple motion, asking the Standing Committee to bring forward legislation to remove all barriers to their ordination. It is clear that the debate carries very far-reaching implications for many many persons (as indeed for the whole Church of England and other Churches also). Perhaps it is appropriate to ask here for our readers especially to pray for God's will to be done—and to be seen and felt to be done—in that day's debate and decisions.

The liturgical agenda are as follows:

### 1 Series 3 Initiation Services—Revision Stage and Provisional Approval

This item should have been taken at York in July and was delayed until now. It should be noted that a preview of it was given in *NOL* for June. It should also be noted, from the section called 'Anglo-Catholic Politics?' last month, that the suggestion has been mooted that, if permission to use oil at baptisms and confirmations is not written into the services, that particular wing of the Church should try to reject the whole package of services at final approval. This does seem to get matters out of proportion. Well, we shall see.

### 2 Adaptations of services for the Alternative Service Book

We proceed with final approval of the adaptations begun in July to Series 3 Morning and Evening Prayer and Funeral services, and add now provisional approval of collects, marriage, ordination and (wait for it) '1½' communion.

### 3 A Daily Eucharistic Lectionary

This is the recurrent GS 365, the Anglicanizing of the Roman daily lectionary. Those who want to see a sample of it are directed back to the almanack we published in the August *NOL*, where they will find that it fails to coinhere with the material coming from the Liturgical Commission. Indeed on two notable occasions—1 and 2 December—the passages read for the Epistle at communion actually overlap with the New Testament readings for Evening Prayer. But then no-one who wants this lectionary ever seems to have asked how it would fit with the other material. Incidentally, we fail to publish the next round of almanack this month not only because we are uncertain whether our readers want us to fill our pages with it, but also because of the emergency at St. John's College (see the Editorial) which has squeezed editorial time and reduced this issue to six pages.

### The impending problems over oil

We noted in June that an amendment had been received to the Initiation Services which would have deleted the opening note permitting the use of oil in baptism and confirmation (as noted above). We recorded last month that the Catholic Group in Synod has raised as a question whether or not members will vote against final approval if this amendment is passed. We can now report that the minutes of the House of Bishops for their separate meeting on 11 October 1978 throw further light on the progress of the oil agenda. In those minutes (HB (78) (M) (M5)) it is recorded that the House received a report from the Liturgical Commission which 'submitted a draft text for the blessing of the Oil for the Sick for consideration by the House'. The Commission also asked whether this was wanted for the ASB, or could wait for the other services for the sick, and indicated that it was deferring consideration of the blessing of oil for baptism and confirmation till after it was known whether this was needed.

It may be helpful here to note that the encouragement for this drafting is in the inclusion in the Calendar material of material for the 'Blessing of Oils' in Maundy Thursday. The Liturgical Commission had no great problems about drafting a text for this, and looked to various models (including Roman ones) for guidance. There was some unhappiness on the Commission, however, about treating the Maundy Thursday provision in the Calendar as necessarily implying that a text for blessing oil had to be in the ASB, as it seemed to some that bishops could well follow their own forms where they were involved in this particular Maundy Thursday observance. There was also some uncertainty as to whether the 'Blessing of Oils [plural]!' implied provision of oil for the sick and for baptisms etc. as two separate provisions. The plural is equally open to the understanding that, as several clergy bring flasks of oil for blessing, the actual liturgical activity is one of blessing plural oils.

Be that as it may, whilst it is impossible to reveal the text sent by the Commission to the House of Bishops, we have again the opportunity of revealing what the House of Bishops thought of what they received! The minutes record three main criticisms:

- (i) The actual text submitted does not make any reference to blessing despite the title to it. The critics were apparently 'mindful of the need to avoid any suggestion of supernatural properties inhering in the oil after its blessing'—and there were bishops to urge that 'there are biblical difficulties in the blessing of material objects'.
- (ii) There was doubt as to whether provision for including the blessing of the oil within the eucharistic prayer should be allowed. It was 'generally agreed that it would more appropriately be used after the Sermon and a renewal of priestly vows or after the Communion.' This must cause some merriment to the angels—the whole Maundy Thursday event has been revived in recent years out of deference to ancient practice (on which the Commission was given instruction by its experts). But now the episcopal officiants at the ritual have stuck in their toes and said they do not want the ancient practice at the heart of the event . . .
- (iii) There was a third criticism about 'the implications of the prayer that physical healing could be expected to follow its use.' So the bishops noted that they were to pray over the oil that its use would bring health to the sick—indeed they themselves now clearly want to 'bless' it, presumably for this purpose, but they do not want any strong suggestion that the sick might be healed. One can understand the hesitation that underlies this, whilst still wondering whether St. James (or the folk who have worked hard at restoring the use of oil) would really go with this.

The bishops have referred the text back to the Liturgical Commission, and have not encouraged the Commission to do anything yet about oil for baptisms. They recognize that this probably means that any such blessing cannot get into the ASB.

#### Footnote on the House of Bishops

The Sixteenth Report of the Standing Orders Committee (GS 391) which also comes to this session of Synod includes a long discussion of what should be done in the wake of the controversial behaviour of the House of Bishops over Josephine Butler and her inclusion in the Calendar. Says the Committee 'we could not be unmindful of the intensity of feeling in the Synod last July . . .'

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GROVE BOOKS

BRAMCOTE NOTTS. (0602 251114)

#### Other matters at Synod

The report *Marriage and the Church's Task*, on which the main motion about the remarriage of divorced persons was narrowly defeated in July, returns this session. It is now proposed from the platform to send it down to the dioceses. If this fails, then a whole series of other motions will be handled. Some of these have liturgical implications—as, e.g., those concerning services after the civil marriage of persons previously divorced. We will report the upshot briefly next month.

There are large numbers of Private Member's motions in the wings. My own on the Charismatic Movement is timed business, as I had already moved it in July. The following motions with liturgical implications are listed, and the number preceding each indicates its place in the queue for time on the agenda:

- 5 'That the General Synod adheres to the view that Infant Baptism should continue to be available to the children of all parents who are willing to make the requisite promises; and rejects the words "and able" which were inserted after the word "willing" in its predecessor's resolution of 1974.' (Mr. J. R. Bradshaw, Salisbury).
- 7 'That this Synod would welcome legislation to ensure that in any parish where four members of the congregation formally requested the 1662 Holy Communion Service, it would be used at least three times a year at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun (though not necessarily at the principal service of the day).' (Mr. R. P. Thomson, Lincoln).
- 13 'That this Synod invites the Standing Committee to introduce a draft Canon amending Canon B8 to provide that a minister need not wear cassock, surplice and scarf when celebrating Morning and Evening Prayer.' (Mr. A. J. Bush, Bristol).

Several others appear further down the list. Near the bottom is Mr. Oswald Clark's memorable (but hardly supportable) motion:

'That ignorance of the Book of Common Prayer has increased, is increasing, and ought to be reduced.'

There is also a diocesan motion from the Chester Synod:

'That this Synod recommends the authorization of the Series 3 Revised Communion Service in pamphlet form: consequent upon approval of the Service by the Synod; and that such publication should take place at the same time as the publication of the Alternative Service Book'

#### The St. John's Setting of Series 3

We fear that this has been the casualty of Robin Nixon's death (see the editorial), and has been squeezed by lack of time. We have it in process, but it is clearly 'November', not 'October', now. The Organ edition costs 60p, the congregational one 15p.

#### A misprint in the corrections last month!

The September corrections to the Almanack material which we published in August themselves now need correcting. Several avid readers have noticed that the last line of corrections (31 Dec:EP/Ps) included Psalm 184. This should of course have been 84. We now hope *this* notice will not need correcting . . .

#### This month's booklet . . .

. . . is no. 61, *One Baptism Once*, by Colin Buchanan. This is a popular treatment of the necessity and unrepeatability of baptism (which therefore bears heavily on the infant baptism question). It coincides with the other booklets on initiation in the series, particularly Colin Buchanan's *Baptismal Discipline* (no. 3) and *A Case for Infant Baptism* (no. 20).

#### . . . and next month's

is no. 62, *Preaching at Funerals*, by Ian Bunting. This considers the preacher's role, needs, and resources, and in many ways takes up from no. 28, *Liturgy and Death*, by Trevor Lloyd.

#### And an apology

One reader has taken us to task for the August editorial where a certain criticism of the intercessions in the draft revised Series 3 Holy Communion was described by Colin Buchanan as 'remarkably like nitpicking'. COB is prepared to do some defending of this: (i) the remark is not directed at any specific *people*, but only at a particular *view* (and any people are free to reject the view as not theirs anyway); (ii) 'remarkably like nitpicking' still leaves the possibility that the view is being said to *resemble* nitpicking, without actually being the same as it; (iii) that it is only when 'charges of heresy' are brought to bear that the signatory of the report feels the need for a firm rebuttal, and that is surely the right of any man of integrity who signs something which other people reject? However, it is clear that the rebuttal could have been made without using this emotive term, and *NOL* solemnly and publicly withdraws it. We offer instead 'to build charges of heresy round this particular change looks somewhat heavy-handed'

HYMN by Robin Nixon

O Word of God, eternal Son,  
Before the world was made  
You were with God the Father one,  
In deity arrayed.  
You dwelt in flesh amongst your own,  
Your own received you not;  
Your glory to the world was shown,  
The world its Lord forgot.  
You did not come to judge our race,  
By Satan's lies enslaved;  
You came, the fount of truth and grace,  
That all men should be saved.  
The Way to death you gladly trod,  
That was your glorious hour;  
You rose to life, our Lord and God,  
And breathed the Spirit's power.  
We thank you that you chose a man,  
Disciple of your love,  
To tell the perfect saving plan,  
Designed in heaven above.  
He wrote for us the signs you gave,  
That showed us why you came,  
That we eternal life might have,  
Believing in your name.