

News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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Editorial

I commented last month on the shift of the scene from the preparation of liturgical texts for the Alternative Service Book to the provision of supplementary and auxiliary materials to help the use of the Book. The official texts are safely in the hands of the publishers (or will be any day now)—what then of the unofficial aids?

The Liturgical Commission is producing its own theological and historical commentary on the new Book, incorporating much sane advice on the use of the services. Grove Books has a different venture on—we have in hand, master-minded by members of the Group for the Renewal of Worship (G-R-O-W) which produces the Grove Worship booklets, an illustrated 'User's Guide' to the new Book. This is not so much for leaders of worship as for actual worshippers. It has short pithy articles covering the significance of the parts of each service, along with general introductory articles. It will include four-colour illustrations, charts, diagrams, and cartoons. It will be handsomely bound in hard covers and attractively presented. The cost will probably be nearer £10 than £5, but the possibility of the Guide being a useful Christmas (or Confirmation) present has been kept squarely in view, and at Grove Books we believe it will be most attractive.

BUT . . .

. . . we have not yet got the money side straight. It looks as though we need an investment of around £50000 to £60000, and we *may* have a promise of half that so far. It has been an amazing feature of this amateur press's operations over the last eight years that when we have asked for money, it has always come just in time. Not that we have been increasing debts—in the last four months we have borrowed £2000 new money and paid off over £4000 in capital debts at the same time. But we now have to think on a different scale. We believe we have a unique aid to the worship of the Church of England in the 1980s, but we do want to publish it this Autumn with the ASB. So we have given ourselves till the last day of March to see whether the money is available. Would you please pray—or give—or simply advise? We shall expect to find God's will in this way. Please do write if you can help in any such way.

Colin Buchanan

THE FEBRUARY SYNOD

No liturgical matters were decided at the February Synod. There was no Archbishop of Canterbury at the time. The Archbishop of York was unwell. There was therefore no president to take the chair as is required by statute when final approval is given. This inhibited the Standing Committee's enthusiasm for Liturgy, and when the agenda came under pressure, the liturgical matters were dropped.

THOSE ROMAN OFFERTORY PRAYERS

The Rev. Christopher Hill, one of the Archbishop's Counsellors on Foreign Relations, sends an extract from the January *Clergy Review*. The article is called 'What happened to the Offertory?' and, amusingly, in the light (or twilight) of Anglican anxiety to ape Rome, the article records:

'But what are these prayers, anyway? They are definitely *not* prayers of offering . . . the translation used at present has resolved this problem . . . implying a future use for the gifts rather than a present action. [But does not the rubric say the celebrant is 'offering' the elements?—COB]. Nevertheless, these prayers are suffering from over-use. They are becoming taken for granted . . . The use of the "holding-up" gesture in complete silence can be very effective.'

This is interestingly complemented by a letter from one Perry Butler, an Anglican student at the English College in Rome:

' . . . re the "famous" offertory prayers. I notice all our "liturgists" here (those doing it for the licence) are very keen to get them said silently and think it very wrong to make a big fuss of them. . . A case perhaps of Anglican Catholics making a big fuss of something where Roman fashions are already changing!'

KEEPING THE OLD LANGUAGE— NOTES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

The Times on 22 December 1979 reported that 30 conservative M.P.s. had tabled a Commons motion urging the Church of England to 'take care' in using modern services 'so that there is no further diminution in what should be the central and regular place of honour of the Book of Common Prayer and the Authorized Version of the Bible in the mainstream of its Worship.' Michael Latham, an Anglican MP, had apparently tabled an amendment reminding the 30 that their motion can be no more than a propaganda exercise because Parliament has no powers over liturgy. We have seen no more of this motion and would welcome information about it.

The BBC matched the Commons by putting on a Radio 4 debate on *You, the Jury* about modern language in liturgy during the Christmas period. Apparently this concluded with a tied vote, whereas the opening vote had shown a balance of sympathies with *PN Review* 13 folk. But who said what and how that convinced the waverers we have not heard. Any reports?

We also have to hand a leading article from *The Times*, dated 20 December 1979. This is self-explanatory, but it does require of the secular reader a knowledge of church affairs which we had not credited to him. Perhaps the journals of this world are wiser than the journals of light.

(Reproduced from *The Times* by permission)

THE LABOUR HYMNAL, SERIES 3

The liturgical revision on which the Labour Party is embarked has now reached the party's Hymnal, also known as the Socialist Song-book. Leaked proposals now in draft form are causing dismay among the faithful. It is expected to be the subject of anxious debate at the next session of the party's general synod in October.

The old Hymnal, the Edward VII version, embodies that sense of continuity and timeless dogma which is such a valued part of the experience of regular attendance at ward meetings. It has acquired a numinous quality from its use down the years, not only on great occasions in the Blackpool Winter gardens but wherever two or three party members are gathered together. For many it is more than the ancestral voice of the English working class: as Prebendary Heffer expresses it, 'They are not just changing a form of worship. They are messing about with the national heritage.'

A spokesman for the revision committee claims that point of view is sufficiently catered for by inclusion in the new draft of more than a dozen numbers found in the Edward VII Hymnal, such as 'The Red Flag' and 'I am the Man, the Very Fat Man, who Waters the Workers' Beer'. It hardly needed saying that Labour hymn-singing should be done 'in a tongue understood of the people'. Young people in particular demanded contemporary values and relevance to the present day. There had been some criticism, the spokesman said, of the omission of 'Jerusalem'. But its original inclusion had always been questionable in view of the fact that it was composed by an individualist called William Blake before the foundation of the labour movement proper. 'Dark satanic mills' was a meaningless concept for the youth of today which had the benefit of many years of Labour legislation in the field of Health and Safety at Work. Besides, the hymn contained military imagery of a type which could only be described as obscene. The old Hymnal also contained traces of outmoded social attitudes like the sexism of 'Goodnight Ladies' and the Uncle Thomism of 'The Old Folks at Home'. The new edition would concentrate on material relevant to the coming ideological struggle and would include alternative musical settings of the theory of surplus value.

A source close to Mr. Callaghan said it was too early to comment: 'We will know better where we stand when the new anthem "Glad to be Gay" has been introduced at the Durham Miners' Gala.'

We are accustomed to the idea that, e.g., the *Communist Manifesto* is the 'Bible' of Marxists. But the thought that 'Series Three' is to become regular secular metaphorical use suggests a triumph of (interim) ecclesiastical terminology which we never anticipated. Has any reader knowledge of comparable uses?

AN EXTRA FROM GROVE BOOKS

At the end of March Grove Books are publishing 'FRB'—*A Portrait of Bishop Russell Barry* by Bishop Frank West for £3.95. This has been commissioned by the Bishop Barry Memorial Fund, and more details will be contained in a circular next month.

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This month's booklet . . .

. . . is Pastoral Series no. 1, *Biblical Perspectives on Counselling*, by Richard Inwood—a self-explanatory title for a very good start to the new series.

. . . and next month's

is Liturgical Study no. 21, *The Westminster Directory of Public Worship*, with an introduction by Ian Breward. This text, taken from a first edition of the *Directory*, makes available again in England a crucial feature of our liturgical history.

. . . and the month after that

sees the next Worship booklet, no. 72, *A Late Night Service—Compline in Modern English*, compiled by Mark Davies. Various adaptations of Compline have been attempted, but the hope is that this text will be as near to conformity with the Alternative Service Book services as possible. Anyone with a local modernized Compline is invited to send it to Grove Books by the last week in March. The text published in the booklet will also be available as an offprint for congregational use.

. . . and the cost of NOL

which is 10p sent with booklets, cannot be held at that price in months when it comes on its own (e.g. to customers who take only Ethics booklets). The charge in 1980 is 15p for those months—which means we are receiving only 5p for NOL after paying postage.

10p per copy (£2.25 for the year 1980)

**GROVE BOOKS
BRAMCOTE NOTTS. (0602 251114)**

... AND ROMAN BLESSING OF OBJECTS

Paul Inwood from the St. Thomas More Centre for Pastoral Liturgy sends us the following introduction to this matter. He says that it is an introduction to the 'Blessings' section of a ritual which has not yet seen, and may indeed never see, the light of day. It is reproduced by permission.

A blessing is a two-way action. God blesses his people through his goodness, through the things that he gives them and the things that he does for them. In our turn, we, God's people, bless, praise and thank God for all that he does and has done for his people.

Often, when God blesses us and when we bless him, there is an intermediate object of some kind. This object also becomes involved in the blessing. When we bless God for the harvest, we are in a way also blessing the harvest itself; it could be said that we bless God *through* the harvest that we give thanks for, and that the harvest itself is thereby also blessed. And when God blesses us by giving us a good harvest, he is also in a way blessing the harvest because he blesses us *through* it.

We cannot actually bless an object ourselves. We can only ask God in his goodness to bless it—and even then, as outlined above, God only blesses it by using it as an intermediary to bless *someone*: which is to say that if we invoke God's blessing on an object we are in effect asking him to bless the people who will benefit by and be influenced by that object.

In the same way, we cannot bless a person—only God can, which is why a priest always says 'May almighty God bless you . . .' and not 'I bless you . ..'. This fresh emphasis in the theology of blessings is something of a new departure for many people. In the past, we often tended to think that by blessing an object we somehow changed it from an ordinary, everyday thing into something sacred. We thought of a blessing as a kind of magic formula. If asked, many Christians of bygone days would have indicated that they viewed what happened to an object when it was blessed as something rather akin to the transsubstantiation of bread and wine at Mass. This, of course, was not so.

The purpose and effect of a blessing, then, is not to alter the inner reality of an object but to praise and thank God for it, to ask him to give his blessing to others through it, and to thank him for what he has already done through it. A blessed object is therefore something to be treated with respect and reverence because through it God enters into a relationship with his people and they with him.

In brief, we realize more clearly today that there is a change of emphasis from the blessing of *things* to the blessing of *people*.

RUMINATIVE FOOTNOTE by C.O.B: If only God can bless people, and we cannot say 'I bless you', what is the comparable argument (and the practical end result) in relation to absolving? More another month . . .

FOR SALE

A second-hand Rotaprint RA4. Apply Michael Botting, St. George's Vestry, Leeds.

PET HATES

are beginning to snowball, having missed last month:

- (1) From Geoffrey Cuming: 'Priests who kiss babies after baptizing them.' [Ah, but, in Series 3 Initiation we have restructured the rite so that you can now kiss the baby *before* baptizing him/her—COB] and 'People who say "Dayity" and "The lawrof the Lord".'
- (2) From Donald Gray: 'Those who say "Let us pray" when they mean "Would you please kneel down (or, at least, adopt some physical position which you believe facilitates prayer)." "Oremus" is a call to prayer—no more, no less. I hate this almost as much as that quasi-liturgical direction beloved of all Mayoral Attendants "Would you please be upstanding". Surely this comes out as a moral exhortation rather than a straightforward injunction to obedient citizens to stand up!'
- (3) From David Lee: 'People who, in a service, say "Shall we . . . [stand, sit, kneel, etc.]?"—No!'
- (4) From Richard Buxton (making part of Donald Gray's point): 'Clergy who say "Let us pray" . . . for example after the Sanctus in Series 3 Thanksgiving. In any case a change of posture is undesirable at this point [and strongly discouraged in the opening Notes in the revised rite coming soon—COB], but what do the clergy concerned think the congregation was supposed to be doing before the injunction?'
- (5) From F. R. Dexter, vicar of Dogsthorpe Peterborough; 'Those people who . . . find it necessary to suck a sweet during the sermon, and who wait until one has started preaching before they unwrap the cellophane . . . Why can't they use the noise of a hymn to cover their misdeeds?'
- (6) From Ralph Mallinson: 'Being expected to sing the final verse of *O Come, All ye Faithful* ("Yea, Lord, we greet thee,/born this happy morning") days or even weeks before the happy morning itself.' [And after? And do we actually know the date of the happy morning?—COB]
- (7) From David Gilchrist: 'The Lord's Table being called an altar.'
- (8) From COB: 'Pews'.

If this flow goes on, the title of *NOL* will be redrafted as *Hates in Liturgy*, which might double its circulation. We also have two replies to last December's:

- (a) Tom Smail writes:
I disagree completely with Ted Pratt and his reaction to being given communion by name. The church in which we became used to Anglican ways and in which ultimately we became Anglicans did this regularly and for us it was one of the high points of the service. Far from drawing attention to our relationship with the minister, it was entirely sacramental of our relationship with the Lord. 'I have called you by name, you are mine'.

If I were to register a dislike it would be of being given communion by someone who takes no note whatever of my particular existence and will not look me in the eye!

So, Ted, if we are ever serving each other, you can name me and I'll promise not to name you. Such is brotherly love.

- (b) David Gilchrist writes:
'Would Ted Pratt like to see self-service, buffet-style reception at communion?—the minister could then be cut out of the administration altogether!'

AFTER PET HATES—WHAT?

We are quite content to go on printing 'Pet Hates' as they are sent to us. But we would be very happy, aping *Reader's Digest*, to publish 'Laughter in Liturgy'—if short contributions can be sent in by readers. No prizes, we fear.

THE NEW HOLY COMMUNION BOOKLET

This is authorized from 1 May 1980, and, according to our latest information, will be published on 1 May also, and will cost 35p. It will be called 'Rite A'—a nomenclature to which we must now accustom ourselves. 'Rite A' in the ASB will be the revised Series 3 Service, whilst 'Rite B' will be the adapted form of '1½' communion. The numerical reckoning, '3' and '1½', will now cease and 'Rite A' and 'Rite B' will begin.

Daringly, we intend to circularize a copy of 'Rite A' with the April Worship booklet to all Standing Order customers, endeavouring to post it to reach you on 1 May 1980. If you do not want it, let us know by postcard, and we will credit you the cost of postage (10p), so that it costs you nothing to write. Others who do not take booklets with *NOL* are encouraged to send 35p and we will then post 'Rite A' with the April *NOL*.

THE CURATE'S OMELETTE RECIPE

They arrived just before Christmas, a questionnaire and a covering letter in preparation for *The Good Churches Guide*, to be edited by C. A. Anthony Kilmister and published by Blond & Briggs. The similarity to the *Good Food Guide* is explicitly acknowledged; a comparable degree of subjectivity is implicitly intended. The key question (no. 3) allows 3½ inches to answer 'Why do you recommend this Church for inclusion in The Guide? Please tell us here what you feel is really "good" about it'. Other Questions are purely factual: name and location of Church and of Incumbent, times of services on Sundays and weekdays, effectiveness of winter heating, bells (six sub-questions). Three questions invite fuller details and literature on architecture/stained glass/furniture, historical associations and churchyard (especially 'outstanding or amusing epitaphs'). Churchmanship offers a multi-choice answer: high, fairly high, middle of road, fairly low or low. The type of service is analysed by two charts; that for Sunday plots early HC, mid-morning and evensong on one side and along the top 1662, 1928/series 1, series 2, series 3 and other (please specify); the midweek chart repeats the liturgies over against HC, matins and evensong. Then is added: 'Does the Church have a professional choir or a choir attached to a Choir School? If so please specify'. (Specify what?)

In all this the most obvious omission is any reference to people. A church is 'it' and never 'they'. This is odd in a guide to help people, apart from the theological implications, and ought to hinder the search for 'atmosphere' and 'feel' which the editor wants to undertake. The project is exclusively Anglican, as far as one can judge from the slant to most of the questions. Architecture, history, churchmanship, and liturgy, are all cited as criteria along with 'a string of other aspects', 'a variety of angles', 'all sorts of features', and 'and so on'. But the respondent will have to supply the *etcetera* himself. He will have to inject references to people, to children in particular, to educational and social aspects of the Body of Christ coming together. Even at the fabric level he will have to mention the car parking or sound reinforcement systems.

The editor writes: 'My own preference I cannot hide from you for I love the beauty and majesty of the Book of Common Prayer'. He does not mention that he is the Vice-Chairman of the Prayer Book Society, although he does mention the 'credentials' of the eight members of his panel of advisers, while insisting they are acting privately and without their institutions being involved. The broad stance is not too difficult to guess from a list comprising Sir John Betjeman, the Bishop of Chester, Lady Harrod, the Rev. Roger Beckwith, Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, Prof. the Rev. Canon J. R. Porter, Ian R. Thompson and Bryan Little. Perhaps it is hard to choose objective criteria other than subjectively, but the question/chart on types of Sunday service leaves at least three things to be desired. First, the only mid-morning alternatives are Choral Eucharist and Matins neither of which describes a communion with hymns and other music adequately and if labels matter then they should be accurate. Second, no allowance is made for evening communion which, apart from being faithful to the original Lord's Supper, enables Sunday School teachers to be regular communicants if involved in the morning. Third, there is no recognition of other forms of service, notably the family services which are such an important feature of many 'good' churches; even family communions may be hard to fit into the prescribed categories.

The procedures of the whole exercise raise some interesting questions. Who received questionnaires (two out of nine clergy in one group I sampled)? By what criteria were recipients selected and how representative a selection has been made? Has a church a right to feel aggrieved if omitted from the start? Will all nominations made be included and if not, by what criteria will selection be made? Perhaps the most important underlying question is: 'What is a good church-goer?' A *Guide* for use when on holiday might be justified but the concept of peripatetic church-samplers sounds like artificial limbs rather than living members. If like me you want to try and rescue the public image of the Church from further distortion, I suggest you write for a questionnaire and tell them what you think makes a church good. The address is 23 Hallam Gardens, Hatch End, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 4PT.