

News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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Editorial

SERVICES FOR THE SICK GO THROUGH BLESSING OF OILS GOES DOWN

RECONCILIATION OF A PENITENT GOES TO SEPARATE HOUSES

One hectic morning at the beginning of Synod, on Tuesday 9 November, led to the three results headlined above. Each has its own story to tell, and the whole package inevitably takes over this editorial.

1. Services for the Sick

The Bishop of Derby moved Final Approval of these services on behalf of the House of Bishops, drawing attention only to the infinitesimal alterations made by the Bishops. There was no debate at all. We trooped through the doors to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority in each House. And the result came out this way:

	Yes	No
Bishops	22	0
Clergy	140	2
Laity	123	5

The services are accordingly authorized from 1 June 1983 to 31 December 1990. We do not yet know in what format the various parts of these services will be published, nor when, but we will keep readers posted.

There was a following motion in the name of the Rev. Jonathan Young of Ely diocese:

'That the forms of service entitled "Ministry to the Sick" be incorporated into future reprints of the Alternative Service Book.'

After the mover's speech, saying how important the inclusion would be, the motion was slain before his eyes by a speech by the Rev. Derek Gibbs of Sheffield, who said he had visions of sick folk lying in their beds under the weight of a yet vaster ASB, unable even to lift it. (This was unfair, as the motion did not preclude offprints and cards, but it was fatal to the motion). So it looks like 1990 before the way of including this material in a future ASB is decided.

2. The Blessing of Oils

Next in line came the innocent-looking 'Blessing of Oils', purged now of its Roman hymn, and surely uncontroversial as a result? Phillip Barrett, who had originally moved the inclusion of the hymn's title in July, made a pacific speech, in which he said he was content to have the reference to that hymn removed. However, all round him it was not just the hymn but the whole concept of the Blessing of Oils which was in jeopardy. In came archdeacon Peter Dawes to trace out the historical origins of the provision. His account went as follows.

The Liturgical Commission had not wanted to include the oiling of baptism and confirmation candidates in the initiation services without a prior debate establishing theological principles—nevertheless, anglo-catholics had forced in opening Notes permitting oiling at the Revision Committee on the Series 3 (or ASB) initiation services. He said that he had learned that the anglo-catholics had threatened to vote against the entire initiation package if the Notes about oiling were removed, and he had, on those grounds, reluctantly withdrawn his amendment at the Revision Stage to delete the Notes. But then there had followed the special provision of Propers for the blessing of oils on Maundy Thursday in the ASB, and now finally came these actual prayers. Admittedly the Revision Committee had difficulty in establishing much theological content to the prayers, but that simply highlighted the problem—the Church of England has no theology of oiling at baptism and confirmation. Others rose to say that it was regrettable that a specialist occasion like the blessing of the oils was getting combined everywhere with the renewal of priestly vows, an event which every priest in a diocese ought to be able to attend without any flicker of doubt or conscience. Michael Saward pointed out that in London diocese around 125 clergy of the evangelical fellowship refused to go to St. Paul's for this event—he alone of them making the trip. The Bishop of Birmingham finally swung the debate, saying that, whatever the merits of Maundy Thursday events might be, he saw no point in the General Synod feeling it had to authorize everything that happened or might happen in dioceses of a liturgical sort. So it went to the vote, and emerged through the doors as:

	Yes	No
Bishops	26	6
Clergy	131	49
Laity	101	61

Having failed to get two-thirds in favour in the House of Laity, the texts were thus defeated.

This was a notable event constitutionally (as well as liturgically and doctrinally). Only once since 1966 has a service not obtained its two-thirds majority in each House at Final Approval—and that was on the first day of such voting, when the House of Laity put down the 1928 (i.e. Series 1) confirmation service by 129 votes in favour to 72 against. A Series 2 'churcing' service never got past the Convocations in 1966; the House of Laity refused to debate Series 2 burial services in 1968; and the House of Clergy only approved '1½' communion in July 1976 by 105 to 52, i.e. within a decimal point of defeating it.

NOL has no great love of this provision, especially in respect of oils for baptism and confirmation. But C.O.B. was a member of the Steering Committee and would have had great difficulty in voting against the House of Bishops once they had yielded that hymn. So I abstained. We now know that we have no theology of anointing in baptism and confirmation, and the matter of blessing such oils is thrown back to the individual bishops and other clergy who may use such oil. We have also escaped canonizing a product called 'oil of chrism', 'traditionally mixed with balsam or other perfumes' (as Note 3 puts it). I am inclined to call it all a victory for commonsense.

Still, many readers of NOL must have been puzzled by the whole business, as they did not have the texts in front of them. As a journal of record, NOL

is enlightening the public which will now otherwise never get these forms, and we publish this month the Notes and the synaxis which were defeated, and next month will follow the texts of the prayers for blessing (see page 5 below).

3. The Reconciliation of a Penitent

This rite was where there was expected to be controversy, and C.O.B. was in the forefront of sustaining it. I had written a memorandum for the House of Bishops for their meeting in October, and, when it was clear they intended to push the controversial text before Synod just the same, I then wrote another memorandum which I duplicated for all the members of Synod. However, other forces were at work also. Some lay representatives on the Standing Committee of the Synod requested the chairman and vice-chairman of the House of Laity for a 'separate reference' to the constituent 'Houses' of the Synod prior to the voting on final approval. These folk met with the chairman and vice-chairman at 9 a.m. on that hectic morning, and gained their consent to the request for the separate reference. Thus the rite came off Tuesday morning's agenda, as it could not now be moved for final approval.

The separate reference required by one House commits not only the House of Laity but also both Convocations (i.e. the clergy gatherings of the Provinces of Canterbury and York) to having separate debates and votes on the service. It has never happened before since Synodical Government began in 1970. The obvious time for the bodies to meet is on the Monday prior to the next session of General Synod, i.e. 7 February 1983. The relevant Standing Order (requiring a meeting within two months of the decision) had to be suspended to prevent our having to meet on New Year's Day or suchlike. The separate meetings will then face the motion 'That the form for Reconciliation of a Penitent (GS 530) be approved'. If it is passed in the House of Laity and in the Upper and Lower Houses of both Convocations, then it returns to the House of Bishops to be brought before the full Synod for Final Approval. If it is not approved in this way then the House of Bishops cannot proceed with it. But there are also other possibilities, partly involving 'following motions'. One reason why the House of Laity asked for the special reference was because it was that House which originally in 1967 and 1968 insisted that liturgical provisions should be unitive, and not be driven through by a steamrollering majority. It was because somebody somewhere had forgotten this principle that the synod was facing controversy over Final Approval of the rite, and it may be that the House of Laity wishes again to read its pacificatory lesson to the House of Bishops. Any House could desire the Bishops to amend the text before bringing it again to Synod—or could desire them not to bring it at all. And if any House gives a less-than-two-thirds majority to the rite, then the writing will be on the wall that unless the Bishops do something they cannot get the rite through the Synod for Final Approval anyway. We will keep readers posted.

One factor which affects all this material is that it is likely that oils will still be 'blessed' with the prayers set out in the rite, even though Synod has rejected them. If the 'Reconciliation' rite is rejected, its material will still be used. It does feel a very odd synodical situation to endure where voting 'yes' and voting 'no' lead to the same result—that the rite is used by those who like it. There seems very good reason to query whether

something relatively insulting to Synod is not happening in such a case. Certainly, a decision has only a faint resemblance to anything one would call a decision elsewhere. If the House of Bishops takes this hint, it will not attempt to bring the Reconciliation rite to Synod for such an empty decision. If they do, well, quite apart from the existing controversy about 'I absolve you', the defeat of the blessing of oils by the Laity is a strong shot across their bows. I wonder how they will interpret it.

Colin Buchanan

TWO NEARLY EDITORIAL ITEMS

In other months either of the next two items might have qualification for 'editorial' treatment, but the oils etc. elbowed them out.

1. The publication of Hymns for Today's Church (£2.95, music £6.95) We have given some advance notice of this (including texts of variant readings of the National Anthem etc.) over some months. *News of Hymnody* for October gave two and a half pages to it, and will return with a very thorough review in January. But now it has all happened. I went to the Press Conference at Westminster Abbey on 8 November, and learned much from the introductions by Michael Saward (the words editor) and David Wilson (the music editor). The main points that remain in the memory from Michael Saward are: that the editors expect that in most cases we shall soon not even recognize where words have been changed, but simply sing them (the best-loved two dozen hymns are the likely exceptions to this); that 'we are not vandals but conservationists, rescuing hymns that would otherwise have perished'; and that, where new hymns are concerned, the proposed texts were mulled over by the editors without knowing who had written them. The press of course were itching to home in on the National Anthem (Michael Saward 'It is arguable that the National Anthem is *only the tune*—the words are gratuitous extras!'), and the 'offence to the nation' motif was spun out by the absurd suggestion (which has since been debated in *The Times*) that the first sing-in was planned for St. Margaret's Westminster in order to convey the idea that the House of Commons was somehow backing the project! How sensitive our politicians can get. Anyway, they had the two nights of singing the hymns (the second was on Free Church premises), and it is now duly launched. It is a handsome production.

2. Grove books' finances

At intervals we have asked for loans from readers, and it is these which have provided capital for our stocks, worth over £30,000 and thus needing support (the bank does not view 80,000 plus Grove booklets as good security). Now we are in need again, not only to repay one or two loans but also to increase the capital. The situation is sufficiently serious as to threaten the future. We would be glad of actual money—but we would also be grateful for ideas, or simply for further expanding sales! Please help. We have run as on an 'expansionist' philosophy, keeping prices down in order to look for the widest possible market. Have we been right? Grove Books is not asking for charity (though such would probably not be refused), but for commercial help. Please write in.

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GROVE BOOKS
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14p

THE BLESSING OF THE OILS [The rejected text]

NOTES

- 1 The blessing of the oils is normally undertaken by the Bishop at Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday morning. Details concerning the conduct of the Service are to be determined by him.
- 2 The blessing of oil for the sick is provided for in Canon B37. The oils for the sick and for use at baptism can when required be blessed by a priest, who will use the appropriate forms provided in Sections 10 and 12.
- 3 Pure olive oil is to be used for the oil for the sick and the oil for use at baptism. The oil of chrism is traditionally mixed with balsam or other perfumes.
- 4 The blessing or consecration of chrism is reserved to the Bishop. In addition to its use in confirmation, chrism may also be used at baptism where the signing of the cross is performed after the baptism, and in other rites of blessing and consecration. It is not used at the baptism of adults when they are also to be confirmed in the course of the same rite.
- 5 On Maundy Thursday a form for the renewal of commitment to priestly service may take place immediately after the sermon and before the blessing of the oils.

THE BLESSING OF THE OILS

- 1 **Introductory Sentence**
Jesus Christ has made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father; glory and kingship be his for ever and ever. **Amen.**
- 2 **Collect**
Heavenly Father,
you anointed your Son Jesus Christ
with the Holy Spirit and with power
to bring to man the blessings of your kingdom.
Anoint your Church with the same Holy Spirit,
that we who share in his suffering and his victory
may bear witness to the gospel of salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
- 3 *Psalms 89.19-30:133*
- 4 **Old Testament Reading**
Isaiah 61.1-9
- 5 **New Testament Reading (Epistle)**
James 5.13-16a or Rev. 1.5b-8
- 6 **Gospel**
Luke 4.16-21
- 7 *After the gospel or sermon the oils are brought to the Bishop. A suitable hymn may be sung.*
- 8 **Bishop** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.
[The text of the prayers which will follow will be printed next month.]

DESK EDITIONS OF THE ASB

We omitted last month: Cambridge/Clowes/SPCK editions at £14.00 and £37.50, and Hodder editions at £10.95 and £14.95.

OTHER LITURGICAL MATTERS IN SYNOD

All sorts of other matters bearing on liturgy were handled in the November session of Synod.

1. Golden Numbers

One of Synod's legal eagles, Michael Hodge, had the task of moving 'That the Book of Common Prayer (Moveable Feasts) Regulation 1983 be provisionally approved' in the last 20 minutes before lunch on that first morning of Synod. He managed to make a banquet of it—to the great merriment of Synod. Starting slowly he was soon into a spate of discussion of not only Golden Numbers, but also epacts, fictional new moons (which he assured us would be useless for telling the tides if we were sailors—unless the Church of England extended its logic, and its powers, and invented ecclesiastical high and low tides derived from its fictional new moons—though even then the sailors would not be benefitted if setting sail on the real sea) along with a lengthy discussion of why the years for which provision was made expired in 2105. A question tabled elicited the information that this was nothing to do with General Synod's predictions about the eschaton but more to do with the production of four pages from the Church House computer. A slightly less-than-eschatological hope was voiced in Michael Hodge's last sentence—when the Parliamentary Act of 1928 can be implemented to fix the date of Easter, all Golden Numbers will be at an end. The Synod looked glazed and unable to dissent.

2. Admission of divorced and remarried persons to communion

Final approval was given to the rescission of the existing regulations of the Convocations which require a reference to the diocesan bishop before persons who are divorced and remarried are admitted to communion. The voting for the rescission was: bishops 25-3; clergy 151-56 laity 118-42.

3. The Roman Catholic lectionary

Brian Brindley got his Private Member's motion into action after all. The one on the Bomb was not moved, as there will be an official debate on the subject in February. So, after the Synod had expressed its wish that clergy should be able to become Members of Parliament, Brian Brindley moved his motion on the Tuesday, and the debate was completed on the Friday. His original wording included phrases like '[This Synod] considers that it is necessary for the three-year lectionary to be used, with lawful authority for a period of six or nine years before it can be usefully compared [with the ASB] However the Liturgical Commission had produced a fence-sitting amendment, and this was accepted by the Synod, and the motion then passed in the following form:

'That this Synod notes the recommendation, in Resolution 24 of the Lambeth Conference, that a common lectionary should be adopted and the attention there drawn to the experience of those Provinces which have adopted the three-year Eucharistic lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church; would welcome the opportunity to consider the authorization of the Eucharistic lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church, and invites the House of Bishops to instruct the Liturgical Commission to prepare a report comparing the provisions of that lectionary with those of the ASB and the Alternative Services.'

So if it is accepted by the House of Bishops, then the Commission will have to do some hard work on a very big chunk of materials. Have any readers any theological wisdom to bring to bear on the subject?

4. The ordination of women to the diaconate.

It looked this year as though the Synod had lost a little of the high level of support for making women deacons which it registered last year. Some took the opportunity in debating *how* existing deaconesses should be made deacons of reintroducing the question *whether* they should be. Synod defeated an amendment, then accepted the principle of conditional ordination (see *NOL* for October) by the following voting:

	Yes	No
Bishops	35	1
Clergy	120	63
Laity	127	53

So there *could* yet be a show-down at the approval of legislation later, but it is more probable that the 63 against in the House of Clergy will reduce rather than increase at later stages.

5. Admission of children to Communion

The Winchester diocesan motion was not reached, but the one in front of it was completed, so it now heads the list for the February Session.

COLLECTS TO ACCOMPANY RITE B

5 December Advent 2	'The Word of God in the Old Testament'	BCP Advent 2
12 December Advent 3	'The Forerunner'	BCP Advent 3
19 December Advent 4	'The Annunciation' O God, who didst choose the blessed Virgin Mary to become the mother of our Saviour; Grant that we, having in remembrance her exceeding faith and love, may in all things seek to do thy will, and evermore rejoice in thy salvation; through Jesus Christ thy Son, our only mediator and advocate. (F. Colquhoun <i>Parish Prayers</i> (altd.))	
25 December Christmas Day	'The Incarnation'	BCP Christmas Day
26 December Christmas 1	'The Incarnation' (Yr. 1)	1928 Christmas 2

LAUGHTER IN LITURGY

The Archbishop of Canterbury told the General Synod this month that he enjoyed participating in British Council of Churches' services. He added:

'But I was a bit thrown when I came across a rubric reading
"Here silence shall be led by the Archbishop of Canterbury."'

This month's booklet . . .

. . . is Pastoral Series no. 12, *Government Economic Policy and Concern for my neighbour*, by Bob Jackson. The author is an erstwhile economist, now a curate in Sheffield. He sets various government economic options over against the effect they have on 'Ethel', a frightened, lonely, elderly, dweller in a high-rise block of flats. So the abstract theory is well earthed, and the Christian dimensions to the problem are brought out cogently.

. . . and our Ethics booklet

is no. 49, *Banning the Bomb?*, by Colin Fletcher—a treatment of the place of the 'Just War' theory, with reference to *The Church and the Bomb* which has recently been published.

. . . and next month's

is Liturgical Study 32, *Whose Office? Daily Prayer for the People of God*, by David Cutts and Harold Miller. This is a historical and contemporary study of the Offices (hitherto not treated in either of our series).

. . . and we put right two nonsenses

by sending with this, (a) to those who take Worship booklets, the official GS Misc 163, *Concelebration in the Eucharist* (cost 15p) which we were unable to send out with booklet no. 82 last month (and others can have sending a SAE plus 15p to us or to the Church House Bookshop); and (b) a stick-in page 3 for Spirituality booklet no. 3 for those who received the booklet from us last month (the page as printed included a large slice of Martin Parsons' memoirs, for reasons which defeat the printers who did the deed . . .).

. . . and renewing

NOL for 1983 will cost £3.25 (£3.75 with *NOH*, £6.30 with *Theological Renewal*, £6.90 with both). You can send your money at any point from now on. (By air costs are £4.25 (US \$8.50), £5 (US \$10.00), £9.00 (US \$18), and £10.00 (US \$20.00) respectively).

THIS MONTH'S COELACANTH

The mixed chalice emotions run on. Bryan Spinks (he of Addai and Mari fame) writes:

'Re Churchill College Chapel [Cambridge]: Why is water added to wine? To make the wine last longer. What does the congregation learn from the ceremony? That the chapel has no money.
'I am sure [he adds] that AHC would approve of a former pupil's utilitarian approach.'

Ceremonies which are unexplained do of course create their own mythological rationale—as witness the answer to the question: Why does the Pope kiss the ground when he lands at an airport? The answer which went the rounds was: If you flew Air Italia [or British Caledonia or Micky Mouse Airways or whatever]—so would you!

THE ASB'S RIBS ARE SHOWING

The marriage service comes in for some more muttering—this time in 'That which God has joined together let not man divide'. The difficulty here is the Bible! The Bishop of Winchester went to great trouble to draw the Revision Committee's attention to the Greek, and we reluctantly bought it.