

News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan Issue no. 97 January 1983

Editorial

NOL does not always show its evangelical colours—and, as will appear, it is not necessarily doing so here and now—but it is well worth reporting here one of the more notable resolutions of the 'Anglican Evangelical Assembly' on 7 January 1983. The Assembly itself is a true meeting-ground of all sorts of Anglican evangelicals, many of them representing diocesan evangelical fellowships, colleges, missionary societies, and other specific interests. At the Assembly, the following motion was passed by 92 votes to 2 with a handful of abstentions:

This Assembly

- (a) welcomes the Private Member's Motion no. 702 to be put to General Synod in the name of J. H. Williams: "that this Synod requests the House of Bishops to set up a small representative group to consider in what circumstances lay people should be permitted to celebrate Holy Communion in the Church of England and report to Synod";
- (b) believes that there are no valid fundamental theological objections to the authorization of appropriate lay persons to preside at services of Holy Communion;
- (c) urges speedy implementation of such lay presidency;
- (b) invites DEUs [Diocesan Evangelical Unions] to consider the subject and express their views on it to the Diocesan House of Bishops.

Here then is a rallying-point of theological policy. What would it imply?

Firstly, we must clear up one or two tiny points! John Williams' motion for Synod would be better saying 'preside at' than 'celebrate', for reasons set out in recent months in *NOL*. And both John Williams and the evangelical assembly seem to have been over-awed by the thought of bishops, when synodically in each case the Standing Committees of the respective bodies ought to have been asked to handle matters, rather than the House of Bishops. But we will not stay on this.

Secondly, there are two semi-theological questions which lurk around the particular debate the evangelicals were having. One is the obvious one: what is a clergyman for? What is distinctive about ordination? If presiding at communion is the last inalienable role he (she) has in the church to distinguish him from the layman, what does *that* imply for ordination when the last role is duly alienated? This is not a reason for not doing it—it is simply that those doing it must recognize that they are altering the whole concept of orders, and may find it even harder to discover wherein lies the essence of being a clergyman.

The other semi-theological question coheres with this. The Anglican Evangelical Assembly included quite a few people who seemed to think

that they *did* know wherein lay the essence of ordination. When they voted on whether women could be ordained they registered differing degrees of support for the different orders—strong for deacons, bare for priests, negative for bishops. The arguments suggested that the principle at issue was the elusive 'headship' factor. The woman should not exercise headship, and orders (or *some* orders) imply headship. My own view is that the 'headship' argument in practice dies the death of a thousand qualifications, and that most actual ministerial roles can be argued to be 'headship' or 'non-headship' roles simply according to who is making the case and in what interest. However, the Assembly which was divided on the ordination of women was virtually unanimous about lay presidency and this is where I think something odd was happening. The questions I would have wanted to have asked (the Liturgical Commission was meeting at the same time, and I barely saw the Assembly at work) would have been:

- (a) is not presiding at communion a 'headship' role?
and
- (b) does the Assembly actually mean *male* lay presidency?

Whilst evangelicals still have a deep-down guts antipathy to any suggestions that somehow a eucharist without a 'valid' priest presiding would not 'take', it seems to me less clear that this must entail a Pavlovian response in favour of lay presidency. The conclusion *may* be right, but the means to it look suspiciously like a theological reflex action.

Nevertheless, the matter is very timely in the Church of England. Over the last hundred years the clergy of the Church of England have bumped the laity's sacramental expectations *up*, whilst, through economics and redeployment of clergy, in many areas the actual possibilities for meeting those expectations have been going *down*. This is particularly true in rural communities. The following 'solutions' are the ways of adjusting which the existing tradition has discovered:

- (i) the clergyman races round five parishes on a Sunday morning. Each of them begins its eucharist at a point three-quarters of an hour later than its neighbour, and the ante-communion is led by a lay reader. With efficiency of timing, the clergyman arrives just in time to take over his own part. Afterwards he has a strict two minutes at the church door, and he is back in his car, racing to the next eucharistic assembly. He preaches only in the first parish; he has time for informal talk with worshippers only in his last one, he is constantly at the mercy of a road-block or puncture, and he is, in essence, what an African priest once called a 'sacramental filling-station'. His orders have actually distorted his role . . .
- (ii) the clergyman presides at communion in one congregation early on Sunday (or, in the starker form of the story, the Rural Dean holds a communion service in his study!). Lay people come from elsewhere to take consecrated elements to satellite half-eucharists in other congregations. These persons do receive communion; do they, in our newer and better sense of the word, 'celebrate'? There is something very odd about it all.

- (iii) the local congregation is invited to elect the butcher, the baker, or the electric-light-maker, to be the 'Local Ordained Minister' ('LOM' is becoming an in-phrase). He is then given some low-key training, and is duly ordained to preside at communion. But, although his orders are both catholic and indelible, he is not supposed to have any prospect of ever doing anything ministerial anywhere else—even if he moves house. And it could well be argued that this is an overkill of orders—that what the church has to give in ordination is so much more weighty in its implications than what is actually needed as to carry an air of absurdity about it.

So, if these 'solutions' raise problems as great as the ones they solve, perhaps we are driven back to look again at lay presidency. There can be no gainsaying its relevance as a question in the Church of England today. That is itself surprising when it is recalled that until the 1970s it was not allowed that the question could even be framed, let alone asked. *Now* we may expect an answer . . .

Hymns for Today's Church is more strictly the business of *NOH* than of *NOL*. *NOH* is duly cautious about all sorts of literary factors attaching to the modernization programme (see this month's issue). *NOL* can afford to be more swashbuckling. We therefore welcome the new hymnbook almost unreservedly. It is not official. It will only make its way if people actually *like* it. What they like may often be less than the best, but, short of official imposition of certain standards of literature and aesthetics, hymnody in print is bound to find its own level. It will either sell and be sung, or stick and be scrapped. So all credit to Jubilate Hymns and to Hodder and Stoughton for trying.

One oddity is that we already have (without any fuss in public) various modernizations in *With One Voice* (Collins). These include 'Glorious things of you are spoken' and 'O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end'. The difference between WOV and HTC is that WOV only does it sometimes, and thus never made a principle of it and shouted it from the housetops (which Grove Books helped the Jubilate crowd to do). Thus in turn they never took stick. But on behalf of Jubilate it must be said that the principle *can* be asserted, and perhaps *must* be. It certainly is in modern Bible versions, in the ASB, and in the Collins Psalter we use with the ASB. In each case, a *consistent* address to God as 'you' has come in.

Furthermore, *NOL* is sufficiently unlearned in finer features of poetry not to mind most of the efforts. If the odd lame line emerges, someone else will have a go in another collection. In general, we anticipate that those singing from this book will as soon forget versions they knew when younger as those saying the Lord's Prayer from the ASB forget the text they knew when younger. The new will simply take over. And it is clear that in Christian worship the future lies with a 'you' form of address. So, thank you, Jubilate.

I have written overleaf about the parlous condition of Grove Books. Please read carefully and prayerfully.

Colin Buchanan

THE FUTURE OF GROVE BOOKS

A Personal Statement by COB

I have given strong hints in recent months that all is not well with Grove Books' finances. The difficulty lies with the sheer size of stock which has to be carried. To be able to meet orders for 100 different titles (and in fact there are more than that in print) even an average of £400 worth of stock of each title would make a total stock value of £40,000. In fact it was over £43,000 worth on 31 December. This sum does *not* represent some capital investment of my own. I have no capital. It is all money either lent through kindness (and conviction that Grove Books is doing a useful job), or gained by slow payment of bills, which I very much regret. The point has now been reached where, partly because my debts to St. John's College were lagging for payment, I have shared the position with St. John's College Council, and asked for their advice and help. Meanwhile various friends have taken an initiative behind the scenes to see if some alternative form of charitable ownership could be established with more-securely-based finance.

But perhaps it all ought to cease? It is difficult for me to know. Because Grove Books is a one-man band there has been no panel or point of reference. I now therefore propose to convene on St. John's College premises on Friday 25 March a consultation of Grove Books' producers and users. Would you like to attend this? Some *NOL* readers will be invited to take part. It too many offer, we shall have to be selective. But write in quickly if you would like to come. The consultation will last from 11 to 4, and lunch will be provided. The whole position of Grove Books will be exhibited, and the consultation will be asked to reflect on both that and also the question whether, and, if so, how, it can continue. The consultation will be a time of sharing and conferring, and will not be viewed as a legislative body. If you cannot come, but have a word of wisdom to send, then please write.

Because of these various moves Grove Books is not now asking for more loans. If there is someone looking for a good home for a gift of £10,000, then we will not say 'no'. That *would* alter the situation drastically. But, without that, the next step is the consultation. Before God, what is Grove Books to do?

Colin Buchanan

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GROVE BOOKS

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15p

RECONCILIATION IN SYNOD (AND ALL AROUND THE THE HOUSES)

That Rite of the 'Reconciliation of a Penitent' returns to the scene in the week of the February session of General Synod. (7-11 February). I put it that way, because its first outing is on the Monday afternoon, not before Synod itself, but before the separate Convocations of Canterbury and York and the House of Laity. It was, readers will recall, the House of Laity which requested and obtained the 'special reference'.

The constitution is *fairly* clear about what happens. Each House must vote on the motion 'That the draft entitled "A Form for the Reconciliation of a Penitent" be approved for a period of use commencing on 1st June 1983 and ending 31st December 1990.' This cannot be amended. If all *five* Houses (the five include Upper and Lower Houses of both Convocations) pass the motion, it will return unimpeded to the General Synod agenda on Tuesday for Final Approval. If one House defeats it, then it is in trouble. And, of course, if any House fails to give a two-thirds majority then, although it returns on Tuesday to General Synod, it will sit under threat of defeat when the two-thirds majority is needed in the three Houses of Synod at Final Approval. What is not wholly clear is how the matter stands if any one or more Houses adjourns and fails to vote on the motion. The lawyers *seem* to think that this would count as negating it.

I, though resident on the Trent, belong to the Convocation of York. I have therefore tabled a 'following motion' thus:

'That this Convocation does not believe that official authorization is necessary for the use of the proposed "Reconciliation" Rite.'

This motion is designed to draw attention to the fact (or likelihood!) that the Rite is *not* an alternative service at all. It does not therefore *need* to be authorized. And acceptance of that point would take much sting out of the argument. Unfortunately, the secretary-general of Synod and his legal advisors decided some time ago that it *is* an alternative, that currently healthy penitents can only be reconciled by use of the 1662 provision for folk *in articulo mortis*, and that no modern form can be used, even in the strictest privacy, without authorization. Indeed a clergyman might well conclude that before he hears a confession he must enquire whether a man has made his will—for such is required in 1662.

So strongly is this opinion held in Church House that I am informed that my motion was seriously considered for rejection as *ultra vires*. It survived, but I am told that the Archbishop of York will read a legal opinion at the Convocation debate, calculated to indicate the folly of passing my motion. I shall urge the Convocation of York to register its opinion just the same!

I also have down a motion to be moved if the Rite does not get a two-thirds majority in one or other House of the York Convocation. This simply calls on the General Synod not to give the Rite Final Approval the next day. The following motions do not *bind* General Synod, but if passed they would have to be notified to the Synod. The Synod itself is timetabled to handle the Rite on the Tuesday, the following day.

IN MEMORIAM—DICK WOOTTON

Dick Wootton died in December. His contribution to Christian worship was relatively modest, but he was author of the book for Indian Christians called *The Christian Worship of God* published for the Senate of Serampore College by the Christian Literature Society of Madras in 1966. In more recent years his work in community relations in Leicester led to his joining with Peter Akhurst to write our Grove Booklet no. 52, *Inter-Faith Worship!* We think he is the first author or contributor to Grove Booklets to die. We honour his memory.

OTHER LITURGICAL EVENTS IN SYNOD

'Liturgical Business' is listed for early Tuesday afternoon 8 February. The first event on the agenda for that is the *Form for the Reconciliation of a Penitent*, if it reappears successfully in Synod after running the gauntlets of the Convocations and House of Laity on the Monday. We do not stay on it now. The second business is final approval for that now famous 'Book of Common Prayer (Table of Moveable Feasts) Regulation 1983'. This it is which evoked a masterpiece of irrelevant twaddle from Michael Hodge about bogus new moons in the November 1982 session. For final approval it is in the safer hands of the Bishop of Leicester, and we can expect less high drama. Synod is bound to accept it, unless sheer inertia fails to get us 'through the doors'.

The first diocesan motion on the agenda (due to be taken not later 5 p.m. on the Tuesday) is the long-awaited Winchester one:

'That this Synod requests the Standing Committee to review the General Synod's Resolution of July 1976 disallowing the admission of baptized persons to the Holy Communion followed at a later stage by Confirmation, with a view, in the light of the growing demand for such an option, to permitting the introduction of this change in certain dioceses for a period of twelve years, as a pilot experiment.'

The Canon (B.15A) on admission to communion allows the Synod to make regulations to admit baptized persons to communion, so, if Standing Committee were, by the terms of the motion, requested to review the existent situation, then change could be brought about by the introduction of regulations to Synod. These could cover minimum age (should there be one?), preparation (need there be any of the child?), sponsorship (what of the child of a non-Christian home?), etc. There would also be immediate linked scope to *raise* the age of confirmation to a credible age of discretion.

The motion has already attracted proposed amendments. One of these would remove all the words after 'Confirmation'. Another deletes merely 'certain' (ensuring that the experiment is not confined to a few dioceses). And there may well be more to come.

NOL has always declared unqualified support for the principle involved here, and now reiterates it. The Board of Education's working party has plans for what comes next, if the motion is passed, and the Group for Renewal of Worship is planning a Worship booklet on practical problems, for publication in July 1983.

Finally, third in the list of Private Member's Motions is that one on 'lay celebration'. Private Member's Motions are timed for 12 noon and for 6 p.m. on Wednesday 9 February (but can always be taken at other odd moments). We have commented on this in our editorial. Readers may like

to recall that the only substantial treatment of the subject in print is in our Liturgical Study no. 9, published in 1977, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist!*, edited by Trevor Lloyd.

It is not *exactly* liturgical, but an issue which bears on Christian worship surfaces at 10 a.m. on Wednesday 9 February. The Synod is due to debate the motion:

'That in the view of this Synod church buildings which have been declared redundant may in appropriate circumstances be made available to those of non-Christian faiths for the purpose of their worship.'

I detect forces of conservative theology gathering against this motion. For myself I am not convinced, and expect to vote in favour of it.

LAUGHTER IN LITURGY

For this month's contribution, we turn to the scurrilous student journal of St. John's College, Nottingham, *NLTN* ('Not The Lunch Time Notices').

It contains the following:

COMING INTO THEIR OWN

Dear Sir,

I feel compelled to write in the strongest terms in response to your article 'Children at Communion' in the last edition of *NLTN*. As usual it would appear that the Church of England has grasped not the horns but rather the hind leg of the whole issue of children in the Church. Despite the apparently enlightened attitude revealed by such statements as 'The baptized infant is a full member of the Church and has a right to be treated as such . . .', the real heart of the matter is never mentioned. I refer, of course, to the thorny issue of infant ordination.

We, of the Infant Ordinands Council for Ministry (*IOCM*), feel it is our calling to fight for the restoration of this ancient tradition, once the right of every baptized infant. I just cannot emphasize strongly enough the gravity of the situation facing the Church due to neglect of this crucial question. Those of you who mourn the sad decline of the Church in our day need look no further for its cause. The statistics speak for themselves. Even today, the vast majority of those entering the Church of England through baptism are infants, a highly significant and neglected point. The figures also show that the number of infants bringing themselves forward for baptism has dropped dramatically and this decline is even more noticeable amongst those who, obviously disillusioned by the intransigence of their adult brethren on this fundamental issue, fail to return for confirmation of their baptismal vows. Our firm belief is that only an immediate return to an ordained ministry by infants can stem the tide of decay.

One only has to consider the strength of the biblical evidence in favour of infant ordination, from the implicit case of our Lord's frequent elevation of children as examples of faith, to the explicit references in much contemporary theology to the 'Infant Church'. If the baptized infant is truly a full member of the family of God, then how can he be deprived of his right to ordination? The logic of the case is utterly compelling.

Stephen Fletcher

This month's booklet . . .

. . . is *Worship Series* no. 83, *Renewing the Congregation's Worship*, by David Parkes. There was an earlier booklet (no. 26, published in 1974) which gave some guidelines, but it is now out of print. David Parkes has experience as both a vicar and a musician, and is used to training both choir and congregation and instrumentalists. This booklet will be greeted for its genuine commonsense allied with a real concern that all parts of our worship should truly be offered for God's glory. It would be very appropriate to have in quantity at a PCC discussion on the music of a parish'. [Please note that this was called no. 84 in the catalogue, and listed for April. It is in fact 83 and comes in January.]

. . . and next month's

is *Pastoral Series* no. 13, *One Inner Urban Church and Lay Ministry*, by Clarry Hendrickse, vicar of Netherley in Liverpool. In this very deprived area, he has asked: do the clergy really believe in the ministry of the laity? Answering in the affirmative, he has gone on to seek out the gifts and ministries of the congregation.

. . . and a reprint

is *Pastoral Series* no. 9, *Good News down the Street*, by Michael Wooderson. This has been a best-seller—and the reprint incorporates that nagging item, the last bit of the series of lessons for the home course in Christianity, which so many people have wanted the first edition to have.

. . . and Ethics

reach no. 50 this month, *Medical Matters: The Patient's Consort*, by David Cook.

COELACANTHS TURN OVER A NEW LEAF

Last year's coelacanths are now dismissed. Even the 'water-into-wine' lies unresolved (one little extra intriguing notion which came our way was nothing to do with alcoholism in the Ancient World, nor the atonement mystically dramatized, but was the suggestion that an ophans' school at Rome was so poor that the ophans brought water as their offertorial contribution—any light on this?).

This year, we turn over a new leaf. One of our assiduous 'Catholic' readers, Peter Faulkner of Didcot, suggests that a real coelacanth is the 'ping-pong' position for president and assistant at the Lord's table. Clearly, he is weary of 'Catholic' practices being up for investigation, and thinks someone else should catch it. So here it is—it is not quite as prehistoric as a coelacanth ought to be by definition, but presumably goes back to the time that Laud was putting communion tables back against the East wall of churches in the early seventeenth century. Does any reader see a present-day justification?

WHAT DID COB THINK HE WAS DOING?

In the second edition of *What did Cranmer think he was doing?*, COB carefully added a line about the blessing in 1548 and 1549 (on page 19)—and got it back to front. Instead of what is written at the end of the second paragraph should be:

The blessing follows—with a new calling for the blessing of the Trinity added after the 1548 "The peace of God . . ."