

# News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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## Editorial

### 'RECONCILIATION' RITE GOES DOWN ALSO

The rite with its 'I absolve you' followed the 'Blessing of Oils' into legal limbo. This is how it happened.

Firstly, on the Monday evening the two Convocations and the House of Laity sat separately, as explained in last month's *NOL*. Canterbury was brief, York a little longer, and the House of Laity (which had called for the separate reference) longer still. The voting was as follows:

		Yes	No	
Canterbury	Bishops	25	2	
	Clergy	93	27	
York	Bishops	7	3	(4 abstentions)
	Clergy	42	15	(7 abstentions)
House of Laity		96	55	

In addition to the above, the Convocation of York debated my 'following motion': 'That this Convocation does not believe that official authorization is necessary for the use of the proposed "Reconciliation" Rite'. In the event the Registrar of Synod, Brian Hanson, had set out a 'Legal Opinion' in a memorandum placed on the seats in all three bodies on the Monday, and this was specifically intended to undercut my motion. Its argument seemed to me thin (some of this ground was gone over in these columns between December 1980 and July 1981). So I pursued my motion vigorously, and failed by one vote only—33-32! The Legal Opinion remained around to confuse the issue the next day, and no doubt *NOL* will have to air and refute it at some point. There is not room this month.

It was in the House of Laity that the Rite ran into trouble. Just as with the Blessing of Oils in November, there existed a solid block of people (not all paid-up evangelicals) who were opposed to the Rite. Largely, but not wholly, this opposition centred on the 'I absolve you'. So the two-thirds majority which would be required the next day was not provided in the Laity that evening.

The next day the whole Synod took it on for final approval—requiring two-thirds majorities in each of three Houses, and with the Archbishop of York in the chair, and under standing orders which permit no closure or amendment (though they do now provide for a reference back to the House of Bishops). Battle was keenly rejoined, COB being involved in responding to a challenge by the Bishop of Birmingham that evangelicals should show from scripture, tradition, and reason, that 'I absolve you' was untenable. It is actually not too difficult to demonstrate the problems it raises on all three of these fronts, and various speakers got in a further smack at that Legal Opinion also. There was a serious attempt made to get the Synod to adjourn (thus avoiding a vote altogether—at least in this session, and probably forever), but those who wanted the text apparently also

wanted (what they could not have) final approval. After the adjournment failed the Synod voted as follows:

	Yes	No
Bishops	35	6
Clergy	157	46
Laity	124	75

Thus the Rite was defeated by getting less than two-thirds of the House of Laity in favour, and it perished.

It is only right that I should add a footnote or two, after three years of fighting it on the Liturgical Commission and in the General Synod. It is a great relief to me that it has now gone away. But note the following:

1. It was not wise for the House of Bishops to insist in Spring 1980 that the Commission disregard the dissent of two members (Hugh Craig had dissented over more material than I had). Two may be a small proportion of a total Commission, but that was only because evangelicals were so thoroughly underrepresented. Just as the Covenant had little chance once the Churches' Council on Covenanting had been ready to drive three anglo-catholics into dissent (and therefore into campaigning against the Covenant), so in this case the Reconciliation Rite was bound to be divisive. It was interesting to discover Mrs. Jean Mayland, an original signatory of the Rite on the Commission, now driven into opposition to it also.
2. It was neither good law nor good policy to insist that the full 'Final Approval' by two-thirds majorities was necessary in Synod. However, I shall quarrel with the Legal Opinion another time. I merely note now that another Opinion exists—that private ministry of forgiveness by an ordained person to a penitent is, according to the BCP, to involve as instrument 'the ministry of God's word', but there are no forms laid down for it. The Church of England since 1552 has not used the term 'Auricular Confession', and it would be very difficult to call this Rite either 'public prayer' or 'administration of the sacraments'. So it is not covered by the Declaration of Assent, and ministers may use what forms they like (*including* the rejected one). If we have to have prescribed forms for private ministry we may yet get orders of service for primal therapy or who knows what.
3. I pay tribute to the generally kind and understanding way in which my anglo-catholic friends have received the defeat of the Rite. I have done my utmost not to use any devious means, but to have the whole matter open and above board, but if there is further fence-mending to be done I should be glad to try it.
4. I make my point about the use of the Rite in the plainest possible way by printing the whole text in this issue of *NOL*. I have not sought copyright permission from anywhere—I imagine that if Synod rejects a text it cannot claim simultaneous ownership!
5. It is clear that the central issue here has been the matter of 'priesthood'. There is now all the more incentive for the Church of England to try to tackle that as an internal question. There is much need for a true theological encounter on the matter.

Colin Buchanan

## OTHER LITURGICAL BUSINESS IN SYNOD

The Winchester diocesan motion about children at communion came up on the Tuesday afternoon. It ran as follows:

'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].'

There was much support for this, though an older style of anglo-catholic resisted it as apparently abandoning the initiatory features of confirmation. They would have preferred to see the age of confirmation continue to creep down, possibly to infant confirmation. But amongst supporters there was division also. Michael Hodge pointed out that the second half of the motion asserted a 'demand' which had not been actually demonstrated, and prescribed an outcome to the review which was too restrictive. The Synod, by a vote of 143-124, deleted the part in square brackets above, then passed the amended motion by 228-104. Thus the Standing Committee has a strong mandate to take action, and the Knaresborough working party will be at work (see page 7 below).

'Golden Numbers' got final approval on the Tuesday, as anticipated.

'Lay Presidency'—the Private Member's Motion of John Williams of Chelmsford—came up on Wednesday evening. At an early stage a member proposed that the Synod 'pass to next business', and this was carried by a narrow majority, 134-119. So the mover was frustrated.

## THE NORTH END COELACANTH

Graham Wolfenden writes:

'... the original intention of the BCP rubric surely envisaged an altar placed tablewise in the centre of the chancel—they still have one at Hailes in Gloucestershire (but instead *use* another firmly against the wall!). For small congregations that *can* gather around the table, perhaps a really sixteenth century position would not be such a bad idea.'

*NOL* endorses this as history, and as the intention of the 1552 rubric. It has been dismaying to see in the last hundred years (and even right up to today?) evangelicals justifying the ping-pong position on the grounds that the Lord presides at his table and we only assist him. This latter-day doctrine implicitly asserts a 'real localized presence' behind the table. Fortunately it is dying fast.

## LAUGHTER IN LITURGY

A Melbourne curate was heard to pray in the intercessions on 30 January:

'... and we pray for God's blessing on the Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser; and the [State] Premier, Mr. Cain; and the Premier of Tasmania, Mr. Gray; and the whole dam issue; and ...'

(Reprinted from *Church Scene*, Australia's Anglican Weekly).

## Book Review

Joint Liturgical Group (edited Donald Gray) *Holy Week Services: Revised and Expanded Edition* (SPCK, published 1 March 1983 in two editions—'full edition' 160pp., 34.50, and 'shorter edition' 92pp., 95p).

The Joint Liturgical Group first published Holy Week Services in 1971 and these have long been out of print. For some time it has been known that a new set was in gestation somewhere in the Group, and now they have come to birth. We welcome them, though, to catch the printers, we cannot review them at length or in depth this month. We hope to give them more space next month. The issue is all the more live because there has been reason to think that the Church of England Liturgical Commission is addressing itself to the same task (which also raises questions about what sort of Synodical authorization would be appropriate for such services). The matter was further complicated when Brian Brindley asked a question in Synod about the status in the Church of England of the Roman rites and was told, quite properly, that they could be used at the discretion of the minister where they are not substitutes for provision in the BCP or the ASB.

The larger book has an introductory essay of considerable interest, and the passion gospels are set out in full (with dramatized alternatives). In the congregational book the introduction is omitted, and the gospel readings are provided by reference only (though the dramatized forms are still printed out).

Stand by for next month.

C.O.B.

## This month's booklet . . .

. . . is Pastoral Series no. 13, *One Inner Urban Parish and Lay Ministry*, by Clarry Hendrickse, team vicar of Netherley, Liverpool. The booklet tells the story of how lay ministry was developed in a deprived area, stiff with unemployment, hopelessness, and kindred social problems—the sort of area where little commitment or initiative has often been expected by the clergy from the laity.

## . . . and next month's

is Liturgical Study no. 33, *Anglo-Catholic Worship: An Evangelical Appreciation after 150 years*, edited by Colin Buchanan. This is the birthday year for the Oxford Movement—and here is a birthday present, a critical but sympathetic symposium. There is an appropriateness about its being numbered '33'! And it will cheer the hearts of the participants in the Catholic Renewal Congress at Loughborough University in Easter Week. Contributions cover initiation, eucharist, ceremonial, offices, orders, architecture, and music. There has never been anything like it before . . .

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GROVE BOOKS  
BRAMCOTE NOTTS. NG9 3DS (0602 281114)

15p

**FORM FOR THE RECONCILIATION OF A PENITENT** (The rejected text)

**Note Confidentiality.** The unrepealed proviso to Canon 113 (1603) provides that 'if any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the Minister that minister shall not at any time reveal and make known to any person whatsoever any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy'.

1. RECEPTION OF A PENITENT

*The priest welcomes the penitent and prepares with him for this ministry. The priest says these or other suitable words*

Grace, mercy and peace be with you. May the Holy Spirit enlighten your heart, and give you confidence to confess your sins, so that you may know the mercy of God.

2. THE WORD OF GOD

*The priest reads this or some other appropriate short passage of Scripture. A selection of seasonal and other alternatives are printed in the Appendix.*

If we say we are in union with God while we are living in darkness, we are lying because we are not living the truth. But if we live our lives in the light, as he is in the light, we are in union with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong.

1 John 1.6-7, 9

3. THE CONFESSION

*The penitent confesses his sins in his own words, either in the form which follows or without particular form*

I confess to almighty God,  
and to his whole Church,  
that I have sinned by my own fault,  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done  
and what I have failed to do  
especially.....

These are the sins which I remember;  
for them and for all my other sins  
I ask God's forgiveness.

4. SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

*The priest may then give advice if he is requested or if he judges it appropriate. He may recommend some prayer or action as a token of repentance.*

5. CONTRITION AND ABSOLUTION

*The penitent should be encouraged to express his sorrow in his own words or he may say either Almighty God, heavenly Father,  
I am truly sorry and repent of all my sins.  
Forgive me all that is past,  
and grant that I may serve you in newness of life to the glory in your name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*or*  
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
have mercy on me, a sinner.

*The priest may extend his hands over the penitent. He declares God's forgiveness to the penitent sinner, using these or some other appropriate words:*

God, the Father of mercies,  
through the death and resurrection of his Son  
has reconciled the world to himself  
and forgives all who repent and believe in him.  
Through this ministry of reconciliation  
and by his authority committed to me  
you are absolved from all your sins  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*or*  
God, the Father of mercies,  
through the death and resurrection of his Son  
has reconciled the world to himself  
and sent the Holy Spirit among us  
that we may know the forgiveness of sins;  
he gives you pardon and peace  
through the ministry of the Church:  
By his authority committed to me  
I absolve you from all your sins  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

6. THANKSGIVING

*Either or both of the following may be used*  
Priest: Merciful God,  
we thank you that you have delivered  
this your servant from the powers of darkness,  
and restored *him* to your peace  
in the fellowship of your Church;  
strengthen *him* by your Spirit  
that *he* may please you  
until *he* comes to the fulness of your eternal kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*or*  
V. Praise the Lord, O my soul:  
R. **and all that is within me praise his holy name**  
V. Praise the Lord, O my soul:  
R. **and forget not all his benefits**  
V. He forgives all our sins:  
R. **and crowns us with mercy and compassion**

7. DISMISSAL

*The priest says*  
The Lord has put away your sins.  
Go in peace, and pray for me a sinner.

*or*  
The Lord has freed you from your sins.  
Go now in peace and in joy,  
to proclaim in the world  
the wonderful works of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*or*  
May the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ  
and his infinite merits, whatsoever  
good you have done and evil  
you have endowed,  
heal you of your sins,  
help you to grow in holiness,  
and bring you to eternal life.  
Go in peace.

[An Appendix provides a seasonal selection of readings: Advent, Mark 1.14-15; Christmas, Titus 2.11, 14; Lent, Ps. 103.8, 11; Holy Week and Easter, 1 Pet. 2.24; Ascension, Heb. 4.14, 16; Pentecost, John 20.22-23; General, Matt. 11.28, John 3.16, 1. Tim. 1.15]

**CHILDREN AT COMMUNION—THE NEXT STEPS**

Now that General Synod has asked its Standing Committee to review the decision of July 1976 that baptized Christians would not be admitted to communion before confirmation (see page 3 above), what comes next? I write from within the Knaresborough working party, though what follows is said on my own responsibility.

1. Standing Committee has dropped big hints that it will invite the working party, which is currently simply the hireling of a committee of the Board of Education, to become its own agency for reviewing the issue and making recommendations. This is not yet a decision of Standing Committee, but is likely to be. Correspondence can therefore still be addressed to the working party, c/o the Rev. Barry Miller, Board of Education, Church House, Dean's Yard, London SW1P 3NZ.
2. The working party is already convening in June a meeting of representatives from parishes already engaged in experiments of this sort, and the outcome of the meeting will help its own work.
3. Whereas between one-third and one-half of the diocesan bishops of the Church of England have in various ways winked at such experiments (and the remainder have been trying to remain faithful to the 1976 decision), it is possible that more bishops would now be ready to do some 'winking at' experiments (though the 'review' is not of itself an alteration of the Canons or of the 1976 decision).
4. Where experiments have occurred, they should perhaps now be encouraged to 'come out' more. One good way of following up the General Synod resolution in dioceses would be not to seek a formal resolution, but instead to request an informal presentation to a diocesan synod of the nature (and fruits) of experiments within the diocese.

5. Grove Books will be publishing as the July Worship booklet (no. 85) an unofficial guide to the pastoral and practical problems involved in admitting children to communion before confirmation.
6. The actual *method* by which the rules could be changed lies ready to hand in Canon B15.1(c) which says that one category of those admitted to communion (other than the confirmed and guests from other denominations) shall be:  
'any other baptized persons authorized to be admitted under regulations of the General Synod'.

So General Synod has power to make regulations of any sort and at any time. It seems clear that in this case there will have to be a report from the body doing the review, and there *might* (but *NOL* does not know the Standing Committee's mind on this) be a reference down to dioceses. There clearly does not *have* to be such a reference.

7. Because the outcome of the review, which was prescribed in the original Winchester motion, (but this was deleted by the amending vote in Synod), is open, it is unlikely that the requisite work can be done for Synod to be considering the subject again (whether to make regulations, or to send it down to dioceses) until Autumn 1984 at the earliest.

**THE ASB'S RIBS ARE SHOWING**

We omitted this last month, but now make good with the popular nomination of 'O Gladsome Light' in the provision for Evening Prayer. Not only does it feel antiquated—on the formal point it addresses God as 'thou', which no other part of modern services is allowed to do in the ASB.

**GODPARENTS**

The motion which Synod accepted in 1981, asking for a further study of godparents, has been passed by the Standing Committee to the Bishop of Leicester. He for his part has advertised his willingness to receive evidence from anyone—so long as it be before Easter. So write to him *now*.

**GROVE BOOKS FINANCES AND FUTURE**

The 'Consultation' on 25 March is on—at St. John's College from 11 (coffee 10.30) to 4. Very many helpful letters and suggestions have come in from people who cannot be there but wish to be supportive of Grove Books. Very touchingly, there have also been gifts of sums from 50p to £30, and some authors have waived royalties to help. I find this very moving, (and it has been difficult to find time to acknowledge such kindnesses), but I should emphasize that I am not asking for generosity of this sort, and, whilst I have accepted what has come and am grateful, I do not want to encourage it among others. The solution has to come through a new ownership, or a major subvention, or greatly increased sales (can you help with *this*?), or some way not yet foreseen. We still have space for a few readers on 25 March and would be glad to hear from you if you wish to come.

C.O.B.