

News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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Editorial

I wrote about three years ago about blessings and absolutions, saying that it was a theme I had treasured up from the very beginning of *NOL*, on which I wished to write but had never in seven years till then found the right moment. I have a similar sentiment this month, as I tackle clerical liturgical dress.

The background to this is stormy. The Reformers abolished the eucharistic vestments, and had the greatest difficulty in getting Puritans to wear the popish surplice—indeed this kind of insistence (found in Parker's *Advertisements* and the 1604 Canons) was one of the provocations which led to the Civil War, and one of the causes of the departure of above 1000 Puritan clergy from their livings after the Civil War. The surplice was again rigidly enforced. Then in the mid-nineteenth century some *avant-garde* 'Catholics' returned to the use of the full vestments of the Church of Rome—citing the 1662 Ornaments Rubric. There were court cases, and the vestments were generally held to be illegal, despite the surface meaning of the Ornaments Rubric. But the rise in Roman usage continued, and the 'middle church' spin-off proved to be the use of stole without full vestments. Evangelicals remained in 'choir habit' for communion, and never wore stoles for baptisms, weddings, or funerals, as others were beginning to do. When bishops started imposing stoles on the newly ordained (was this in the 1920s?) stern evangelicals resisted the garb, and finally won battles the results of which are reproduced in the opening Notes of the ASB ordination rites. Then in 1964 the Vesture of Ministers Measure went through Parliament, and this gave birth to the present Canon B 8, which provides that the Celebrant at communion 'shall wear' cassock and surplice, or combinations ending with 'alb with the customary vestments' (the chasuble—or poncho—never gets mentioned by name, as we are still a little coy about it . . .).

There is thus now no question about legalities. Nor is there supposed to be any question about doctrine, as the Canon reads 'The Church of England does not attach any particular doctrinal significance to the diversities of vesture permitted by this Canon . . .'. So it is not in line with that Canon to teach that the use of the chasuble, say, signifies that the Church of England has a particular kind of priesthood offering a particular kind of sacrifice at the eucharist. There were nineteenth century manuals which so taught, but the Canon is supposed to have seen them off. The Church of England is officially comprehensive at this point.

Usage does not wholly conform to even this permissive Canon. The 'cassock-alb' has no place in the Canon, plenty in the parish churches. The Epistoller and Gospeller are supposed to wear the same garb as the

'celebrant' (though this has nothing to do with 'concelebration'). The Canon makes no provision for what additional distributants shall wear. So in many parish churches ministers, deaconesses, readers, and other helpers robe to distribute the elements, but lay folk come out and read the Epistle and Gospel with no special robes on. And there is no provision here whatsoever for what the recipient of orders shall wear.

In some respects the rationale for the eucharistic vestments has always been obscure. It is not possible to exhibit a continuity by a usage which ceased for three hundred years. It is not possible to place ourselves alongside Rome if only a portion of the clergy wear the garb. There *may* be reason for the use of liturgical colours, and it may certainly be appropriate to fault the 'choir habit' as being colourless on the one hand, or surmounted by a coloured hood declaring the wearer's degree on the other.

So where are we up to? Clearly the only usefulness in the Canon is to indicate that particular styles are optional, and none is requisite. This has permitted the search for new garments, and the 'cassock-alb' is clearly one of the fruits of it. I think we are past the point where evangelicals can or should be working for the return of the whole Church to the reformation usage—and self-protection on a liturgical island seems to have little forward-lookingness to it either. But it would be sad if evangelicals, losing their rigidity, simply settled for yesterday's mild catholicism. There ought, surely, to be an element of tension between where we are and where we would like to be. I suggest:

- (i) that bold—and, yes, colourful—experiments be attempted. Some do exist.
- (ii) that ministers attempt to get congregations accustomed to rites used with and without distinctive vesture, lest the congregations become sunk into a rut.
- (iii) that persons not required by Canons to robe should not robe (distributants need not hang around the sharp end of the building through the service, but should just come out when needed).
- (iv) is there any mileage in men not being skirted . . .? And do visiting (or home) *preachers* have to robe?

Interesting information about pioneer work would be appreciated.

We start a new feature this month 'The Visiting Preacher', and the form of the first one is deliberately chosen to ensure that no one thinks that COB is always reporting first hand on particular preaching trips he has been making. He might be sometimes, but the title 'Visiting Preacher' is meant to conceal when and to whom the event occurred.

Colin Buchanan

VE DAY SERVICE

Stand by for reports of the next church-state liturgical encounter—the Archbishop of Canterbury is coming home from Australia especially to preach to HMG on 8 May.

GROVE BOOKS APPEAL LITERATURE

After all the saying that we hoped to have news soon—now it is here. With this issue of *NOL* we distribute the Grove Books appeal brochure with tear-off slip and a reply-paid envelope. Please reply as quickly as possible (overseas readers have an addressed, but not stamped, envelope).

The initial Directors of the Company, 'Grove Books Ltd.', represent the various groupings which have an interest in the enterprise: St. John's College, printers, authors' groups, those who have lent money, etc. The brochure cannot but set out the need for large sums of money, but the hope is that after twelve months the customers of Grove Books, particularly the Standing Order ones, will have 'associated' in strength with the Company, and thus be in position to elect a proportion of the Directors, making it a true partnership between the producers and the readers. This would also guarantee continuity of theological and personal character to the booklets (and *NOL/NOH*) as the assumption is that it is those who like the general thrust of the productions who would like to be associated with the running of the Company. So we do value the prospect of having many friends 'associate' with Grove Books Limited.

THREE FOOTNOTES ON 'ADULT BAPTISMS'

- 1 Enquiries have come in as to *how* the case for 'sacramental initiation complete in baptism' can be taken to its next stage of implementation. *NOL's* own guess is that the children at communion issue is the one which will next make the case—as it will identify confirmation the more strongly as the ratification of baptismal vows, and not as initiatory.
- 2 Testimonies have come in of actual baptisms by submersion, including in one case a photo (not reproduced here) of Kevin Fitzgibbon of Corby submerging an adult in a local swimming pool. This was apparently followed by a parish swim—rather like Cranmer permitting clergymen to take home bread and wine from the communion service for their own private use, only this is the watery equivalent. (Please note that, as the photo shows, borrowing the Baptists' waders is recommended and approved Anglican use, until such time as Wippells offer them alongside cottas and other less functional gear to Anglicans, but borrowing Baptist premises is viewed here as a cop-out . . .).
- 3 One reader, Nigel Hartley, in Ipswich was about to present *The Importance of Being Earnest* in his parish, and he took the opportunity to issue a learned footnote in the programme, pointing out that Canon Chasuble is wrong to say that 'sprinkling is a perfectly canonical practice'. We hope this sort of contribution made the playgoers feel they had some theological input as well as some Wilde comedy.

This month's booklet . . .

. . . for the first time in thirteen years does not exist. The reason is simple—the liturgical 'extra' planned for this month has been held over whilst Grove Books gets through the necessary preparing, printing, and distribution to launch the Company (on which see below). There *is* an Ethics Booklet—no. 57, *Sex Therapy*, by Richard Burridge.

. . . and the Grove Books Ltd. appeal brochure

should also be with this—that is a letter giving the information, and a tearoff slip and a reply-paid envelope. If you wish to 'associate' or to make a covenanted payment to the company, please return the slip asking for the forms. If you wish to contribute a donation or loan, then that can be put in the envelope direct. And if you simply wish to make your six-monthly payment, then you have struck it lucky, as you will not have to pay postage on sending it . . .

. . . and next month's booklet

is Pastoral Series no. 22, *Christ's Exclusive Claims and Inter-Faith Dialogue*, by Chris Sugden. This takes seriously the presence of other faiths in British society today, and responds to the BMU report on Inter-faith dialogue—but is somewhat tougher in stating the 'exclusive' claims than the BMU report is.

. . . and a reprint (or rather second edition)

is Ministry and Worship no. 42, *Christian Healing the the Parish*, by Michael Botting. This booklet went through two printings in the 1970s, and is now reprinted because a special need which it meets has led to a Leeds consultant finding capital to provide for it. The author has rewritten about a quarter of the booklet in the light of further experience and reflection, and the result is a pastoral booklet which is thoroughly up to date. (We *still* hope to reprint no. 58, which has been half-advertised over the last two years—perhaps the capital of the new Company (see elsewhere in *NOL*) will provide for it . . .).

LAUGHTER IN LITURGY

Peter Mosley, an Army chaplain on the island of Benbecula, writes in: 'A quote from your Worship series no. 91 has rather a nice ring for someone in military service . . . Towards the bottom of page 9 you refer to " . . . the unsatisfactory Mark 10 Gospel". Please send me a copy of the Mark 11 for evaluation and service trials.'

STOP PRESS: On the last day of April news broke that the Prince and Princess of Wales had been stopped from attending a papal private mass—apparently on instructions from the Palace. It seems that Church of Scotland worries lay behind these—but it is also very embarrassing . . .

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CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

As I got myself involved in a dispute about forms of absolution from 1980 to 1983, I have been waiting for the dust to settle a little before reflecting further on the 'ministry of reconciliation'. I therefore offer the following interim positions against which readers may shiver a lance:

- 1 In the beginning of the Christian Church there was no special one-to-one clerical ministry of absolution. There was the reconciling force of the gospel (this is surely what John 20.22-23 embodies?); there was a discipline of ex-communication, and restoration, exercised by church leaders; and there was some measure of individual discipleship and spirituality.
- 2 The later developments of both East and West went well beyond this, and, in effect, located in the one priest power to absolve and restore. In the West this was developed into a system, relating specific 'penances' to specific sins, quantifying the relief from purgatory thus afforded, sometimes making monetary charges, standardizing the formula of absolution ('Ego absolvo te'), in the later stages importing the quotation from John 20 into the ordination of priests, and canonizing 'Penance' as one of the seven sacraments.
- 3 The Reformers dismantled all this, except the John 20 quotation which they made more central to the ordination, presumably on their own understanding of what Jesus meant in John 20 (preaching the gospel?). References to 'opening grief' to ministers in 1552 should be very carefully compared with the comparable passage in the long exhortation to communion in 1549. The absolution in the visitation of the sick ceased to be a form to be used in auricular confessions.
- 4 The restoration of urgings to auricular confession as part of ordinary disciple in the nineteenth century led to an outcry, though this died down by the turn of the century. The advocates of the pattern had bought off the cry by modifying their urgings—the slogan now became 'All can, some should, none must'. This has since been treated as though it were part of our formularies of faith.
- 5 All can concede that private ministry to each other is part of Christian pastoral care; that at times Christians need to be confronted with themselves in a somewhat unsparing way; that forgiveness of sins and true renunciation may be well ministered in this way; and that folk may desire an authoritative word to effect restoration. The issue in this consideration is *not* the form of words to be used. That argument may be continued, though the synodical issue I was fighting concerned not so much whether a certain form ought ever to be used as the status to be given to that form in the Church of England. No, the issues here are slightly larger:
 - (a) is there really here a *thing* which we can call a 'sacrament'?
 - (b) does it require an ordained priest? If so, why?
 - (c) what is being said when a priest says, as an indication of the lay strength of his parish, that he has 'n' penitents? Is he claiming these as the central test of his pastoral effectiveness? If he is, what has happened to 'All may, etc.?' If he is not,

then it is a random and odd way of describing the laity (like saying 'we have "n" sinners who know a way of being forgiven'), and certainly no good test of strength.

- (d) what is it for a Christian, under God, to 'stand on his own feet'? Or, to put it another way, is there an element of dependence being built up if Christians are turned into regular-as-clockwork penitents?

The answer to these questions will come not by testimony from those who are being spiritually helped. They will come with a more objective assessment of the role of this ministry in the *strategy* of the local church.

C.O.B.

Short Notices

George Appleton (general editor) *The Oxford Book of Prayer* (OUP, 1985, xii/398 pages, £10).

This is not a review—the book is too full of good things, and time and space are too short for a proper handling of it this month. We intend that a full review shall follow. But it may whet the appetite to note that there are 1120 items in the book—personal prayers, liturgical prayers, ancient prayers and modern prayers, Christian prayers and (in a limited section) prayers of other religions. A long section in the middle, of 'Prayers of Christians: Personal and Occasional', is arranged round the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which give a keynote to each section: and the following section, of 'Prayers of the Church', is arranged under headings from the Apostles' Creed. This includes a few select eucharistic prayers (Rite A is represented by the Third Prayer), and an appendix to the book adds notes on these. Collects, hymns, offertory prayers, the central prayer of the Methodist Covenant Service, even the ordination prayer at the consecration of a Chaldean bishop: these are the range of contents of this section. Anglican sources (BCP and ASB as well as overseas books) get a good look in—I wondered whether one of the 'Frost' prayers would be counted worthy, but failed to find one.

Alan Dunstan *Interpreting Worship* (Mowbray's, 1984, 102pp. £3.95).

This is a book which we should have noticed before, and it is a hard one to identify exactly. Alan Dunstan is keen on right presentation of liturgy (and complains of lack of help, in this area—but in fact surely there is now plenty of writing on the subject?). He is concerned for 'mystery', and discusses the issues connected with ancient and modern language. He is marginally liberal, and is anxious to get the status of the Bible right—but he is also a preacher who wants powerful and relevant application of the biblical message. He has written earlier on hymnody (*These are the Hymns* (SPCK)), and both quotes from hymns with relish here and returns again to advice on how to choose and use hymns. There is an anecdotal ring to it (perhaps as in Alan Dunstan's preaching?), but there is also a great concern for the majesty and the love of God. He is not just concerned about a programme, but about its outcome—the glory of God and the building up of his people.

IN MEMORIAM

Douglas Webb

Douglas Webb, who died suddenly in February, belonged to that increasingly rare breed of clergymen in the Church of England—the scholar-parson.

From 1959 until his retirement in August 1984 he was Vicar of Wilburton, near Ely. His day off from the parish was usually spent in the Cambridge University Library, particularly in the manuscript room, studying the Nestorian liturgical rites. Although his name was little-known in England, his liturgical work was well-known and appreciated by distinguished Continental liturgical scholars. Douglas was a regular participant at the annual St. Serge conferences in Paris, and his papers appeared in such journals as *Ephemerides Liturgicae* and *Le Muséon*. He was a personal friend of Dom Bernard Botte, and he knew the great names of Syrian liturgical scholarship—Khoury-Sarkis and Raes. It was to Douglas Webb rather than to Edward Ratcliffe that Dr. W. F. Macomber communicated the discovery of the Mar Esa'ya manuscript of Addai and Mari. He was not without a sense of humour. Commenting upon the Pastoral Letter introducing the ASB, which the clergy were asked to regard as confidential until a certain date, he wrote:

'It was a letter of such inconsequence that it could have remained confidential for ever without any great loss.'

His liturgical interests were of the type that many English liturgists dismiss as antiquarian. Without his sort of study, however, other liturgists would be unable to extrapolate liturgical lessons for the Church today.

A characteristic of Douglas' papers was a conclusion with a quotation from the liturgical rite he was discussing. A fitting conclusion to this *In Memoriam* is perhaps one of the *Moutwas* from the Nestorian Burial rite for priests:

'By the ministry in which I served with you, let not my remembrance be forgotten from among you, and when you stand in the sanctuary think of me in your prayers.'

Bryan D. Spinks

Julian Thornton-Duesbury

'T-D', as he was always known, died in April 1985, and his obituary notices drew attention to the two best-known features of his life—firstly his adherence to MRA alongside his evangelical Anglicanism (a combination which was both rare, and yet held tenaciously by T-D); and secondly his mastership of St. Peter's College, Oxford, which distinguished his latter working years. What I did not see anywhere was a note that he was a member of the Liturgical Commission in the 1950s—perhaps he and Douglas Horsefield and Cyril Bowles were the ones specifically designated as evangelicals. I do not know what contribution he made, nor even when he joined and when he was dismissed, but his death removes another of the very small band of survivors from the 1950s, concerning which we look forward to Ronald Jasper's history. And T-D, who was a man of considerable godliness, even if we know little of his liturgical scholarship, should have some recognition.

C.O.B.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Colin,

With reference to your recent editorial we must take your word for it that evangelicals have seen through the notion of ministerial priesthood as a possible pointer to contemporary understanding of ordination.

Some of the rest of us, however, are not so enlightened and would appreciate a serious examination of the matter rather than the jocular dismissal which is all you offer.

Perhaps Rowan Williams who has talked such excellent sense on eucharistic offering might be a help to us weaker brethren on this one too.

Hopefully yours,

Tom Smail

Dear Colin,

May I add a footnote to Richard Rutt's remarks on the bishop's staff, with the general tenor of which I entirely agree?

He writes: 'I know nothing of its history in Greece, though the Greek bishop's staff is now topped with two serpents, and looks not in the least pastoral.'

It would look pastoral to, e.g., a Macedonian peasant, because its shape is precisely the same as that of its western counterpart—a shepherd's crook, of a type once common and still to be seen in the Balkans. The conventional serpentine decoration is merely an elaboration of the two hooks with which, for obvious practical purposes, the head of this tau-cross shaped staff is equipped. Whence the decoration? I don't know; it *may* be of ecclesiastical origin, and bear reference to Moses and Aaron and all that, but I suspect that it too may have originated in the shepherd's crook, a typical example of the ornamentation with which many shepherds in the past embellished their staves and amused themselves during their long lonely vigils—compare some of the carvings on crooks which have been shown on the TV programme *One Man and his Dog*. The tau-shaped shape of the bishop's staff, incidentally, was not uncommon in the west in the early middle ages.

Bill Jardine Grisbrooke

THE VISITING PREACHER REMARKS . . .

In the notices the blighter said: 'We are grateful to the archdeacon for coming to preach this morning, and next Sunday we shall have *two* clowns.'