

# News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

Issue no. 127

July 1985

## Editorial

A publication we should have noted in June is *Rural Anglicanism* by Leslie Francis, published by Collins at £3.95. This is a research project by an indefatigable researcher, and it is subtitled 'A Future for Young Christians?'. It has already seized considerable publicity, especially as it portrays a sad position for the rural parish. Whilst the research is concentrated upon a single unnamed diocese (almost certainly in Suffolk), yet the onus is on other dioceses to demonstrate that they are having a greater gospel impact on the rural areas.

The research involved the use of a questionnaire to 171 rural incumbents in the chosen diocese, along with some investigation on the ground of one particular deanery—an investigation conducted by Westcott House ordinands.

Much of this research concerned Sunday services, and much of the measuring of the success or failure was in terms of the numbers of people with whom the church was 'in contact' each Sunday. (Leslie Francis suggests from his survey that this figure derives from the total population, with an adverse loading where the incumbent has more than one parish to sustain, and where the clergyman is over 60 years of age—but there might be inverse cause-and-effect factors at work—e.g. that the over-60s get sent to clapped-out parishes, rather than that they clap them out!) At any rate we are left to look largely at Sunday church attendance to assess the rural church phenomenon today.

So what do we find? The total impression is of patterns very dependent upon the clergyman for the Sunday services—partly through the slow advance into the countryside of the parish communion (it looks as though matins and evensong hold up better, at least in terms of sheer survivor ability, in the countryside). But the canonical need for a presiding cleric is by no means the only pressure upon him. Rather it looks as though most of the initiative and the administration must come from him—almost that he sustains the round of Sunday services as a sheer dead-weight which he carries on his own. Organist, choirs, and bellringers, may assist, but it is only the first of these which is still nearly universal, the second are a mixed blessing, and the third come out as a very dubious gain indeed. Readers exist, and often take non-sacramental services whilst the vicar is on another part of his Sunday round. It is unclear whether anyone ever monitors them, or works to improve their ministries. Indeed, the saddest general impression from the book is that the clergy themselves, whilst in general maintaining their rounds, are doing little more than maintain. There seems little concern for the preparation and delivery of sermons—certainly little expectation that the word of God will transform the lives of their congregations. Indeed, even the welcoming of visitors was as

notable in the breach as in the observance, whether by notices outside the church telling when there would be Sunday services (which might often vary on a week-by-week basis through the month), or by the actual recognition and greeting of folk present as guests on the Sundays. The persons attending included very few teenagers (the category with which Francis is particularly concerned). Obviously, there were variations from place to place, but the overall impression remains strong. What conclusions should the urban reader draw? Here are some questions, even if they fall short of conclusions:

- (i) Is the Church of England hanging on to a notion that it is still central to rural community life, when it has in fact been marginalized? Or is it still central, and is simply missing its opportunities?
- (ii) Is it necessary to small numbers at worship that they should follow a formal routine, or is there some way (avoiding pews) whereby they might be forged into a more truly Christian community by the style and agenda of their meetings?
- (iii) Is it necessary for rural parishes to run services on a penny-packet basis, with a clergyman rushing round? Here I write with a little experience of rural parishes a hundred miles long in Australia—and there worshippers readily travel 20 or 30 miles to church. And I do hear tell of one or two places in England which are geared on the same basis to having a consistent pattern of Sunday services in one or two centres in a group, but with a comprehensive transport programme to ensure that everyone can attend without difficulty. This does of course require the sense that meeting for worship is more crucial than sticking through thick and thin to one's own parish church. So it is a problematical question. But Roman Catholics and Quakers in the countryside have to view their attendance at worship as more important than their parish boundaries, so why not Anglicans?
- (iv) This last point raises the question as to whether sufficient has yet been done to go ecumenical in the countryside. Would the new LEP Canons not serve the countryside Anglicans and Methodists well as a starting point for getting the Christians of a village to worship together, and to seek to merge their life?
- (v) What is actually happening mid-week in village church communities?

So much for far-off urban questions . . .

This is the first *NOL*, and indeed the first publication of any sort, from the Company, Grove Books Ltd. There is news of the Company elsewhere in this edition, but we hope it will from now on be unobtrusive, and we can stick in general to news of liturgy.

Colin Buchanan

## THE VISITING PREACHER REMARKS

'How do they ever manage without a mirror in their vestry?'

## ON LEAVING THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The day I am drafting this, Clifford Longley is writing in *The Times* an article entitled 'Softly, softly towards Rome', asserting that 'the present flow of members of the Church of England into the Roman Catholic Church is more substantial than has been publicly acknowledged so far'.

At first glance, this is difficult to believe—departures to Rome have been so publicized lately that any hint anywhere of an Anglican wobbling on the brink would be seized by the media and inflated that one genuinely doubts whether such hints exist. And the recorded flow is ludicrously slight in relation to the publicity it has attracted in both the church and the secular press. In 1983-4 we heard of three sometime General Synod figures. In 1985 we have had the vicar of the University Church at Oxford emulating his great predecessor John Henry Newman, and we have had one College chaplain going the same way. But this 'flow' is only the standard trickle of each year. The persons are not necessarily connected with each other, and it is difficult therefore to cumulate them.

It would be very difficult indeed to see the prospective ordination of women as *the* precipitating factor—for this would be singularly perverse on the eve of a General Synod election in which this issue will probably figure largely. Until the new Synod is elected no-one can know that the Church of England will in the next five years take any specific action on this issue (I strongly believe that the Synod will proceed with the matter, but the evidence cannot be there till after the election is over). In fact it does not appear that any of the departing persons mentioned above actually viewed this as determinative. Rather, there was a general sense that the historic Western Church is right, and any splinter group must be wrong, and thus the case for being 'C/E' disappears. This is singularly near to the original reasoning which led Newman from the University Church of Oxford to the Church of Rome in 1845. It is a reminder that Anglicans are wise to know both why they are not Roman Catholics, and also ready to vindicate independent action by the Church of England or by any other Anglican Province. Once we remind ourselves that the Church of Rome has erred at points where we believe ourselves to have done better, then we are prepared for both lines of action.

For the moment we leave aside further attempts to beef up anti-Roman polemics, and note that the flow of notable persons to Rome over the last eighteen months is no different from what it has been at any time in the last 40 years, that the flow in the opposite direction is probably just as substantial, and that no special new phenomenon has occurred. The temptation to blame the Bishop of Durham is quite strong, but no assigning of causes is much use if there are on inspection no visible noxious effects.

## LENT AND HOLY WEEK IN SEPTEMBER

This curious compressed liturgical feast offered by the Liturgical Commission to officers and liturgical committees in the different dioceses of the land still has some vacant places at £36-£40 for the three days 23 to 26 September at Keble College, Oxford. Likely candidates are invited to contact Mr. David Hebblethwaite, secretary of the Liturgical Commission, in Church House, London, if they wish to come.

## THE COMPANY'S BUSINESS

On 1 July, when the new Company was due to start trading, it had capital of around £17500 in hand—half in loans, half in outright gifts and subscriptions. This was well above the bottom figure sought in the Appeal, and offers good hope that the Company may trade healthily. Already it is putting in hand reprints of Worship nos. 70 and 74 *Preaching at Baptisms and Preaching at Weddings*. No. 44 *Exorcism Healing and Deliverance* is next on the list for this series. And even *Hymns with the New Lectionary* is under consideration.

For the record, the actual June despatch took until the evening of Monday 8 July, and the actual trading of the Company began on the morning of Tuesday.

## THE LITURGICAL COMMISSION PRODUCES A FULL BISHOP

This time it is David Hope, vicar of All Saints, Margaret Street, and erstwhile principal of St. Stephen's House, Oxford, who is to be a bishop—and he is to be diocesan bishop of Wakefield, and will be consecrated in the Northern Province some time in the Autumn. We stand open to correction but think this is the first time a member of the Commission has been appointed a diocesan bishop since Cyril Bowles became Bishop of Derby in 1969.

## This month's booklet . . .

. . . is Worship Series no. 92, *Evangelical Anglicans and the Lima Text* drafted by Tony Price on behalf of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC). This Booklet, which is in general positive about the Lima Text, ranks alongside the slightly thinner one drafted by John Stott, *Evangelical Anglicans and the ARCIC Final Report* (50p). The two ecumenical reports are referred together to the dioceses of the Church of England, and diocesan and deanery Synods will soon find themselves debating these doctrinal issues—in the case of Lima, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

## . . . and next month's

is Pastoral Series no. 23, *Groups: Asking the Right Questions*, by John Finney, the Adviser on Evangelism to the Bishop of Southwell. His concern is to get the right questions asked at the outset, and he divides his consideration between house-groups and 'nurture groups'. This booklet will stand alongside Eddie Gibbs' *Ministry and Worship* no. 64, *Grow Through Groups*, and Patsy Evans' Pastoral no. 18, *What Me? A House-Group Leader?*, about to have its third printing.

ISSN 0263-7170

(£3.55 by inland post for the year 1985 – £4.20 with *News of Hymnody* added)  
Editorial address (from 22 August): 60 Handsworth Wood Road, Birmingham B20 2DT  
(021-554-5219)

GROVE BOOKS LIMITED

BRAMCOTE NOTTS. NG9 3DS (0602 251114)

## GENERAL SYNOD JULY 1985

By running slightly late with the June issue (through other pressures of an unrepeatable sort on the editor) we slipped a report on the first day of the July Synod (i.e. Tuesday 2 July) into that June issue. Indeed the printers acted so smartly that members of Synod had copies in their hands (printed in Nottingham) on the Thursday morning. So Tuesday is covered. What happened later in the week?

- (a) On Wednesday the Synod debated two motions on the use of Sunday and finally passed the following by 367 votes to 1.

'That this Synod, believing that every society needs a publicly expressed day of rest and re-creation, such as the Christian Sunday has provided, and that society also needs symbols which point beyond market forces as the determining aspect of our life in the community:

- (i) notes with concern the recommendation by the Auld Committee of Inquiry into the 1950 Shops Act that shop hours should be deregulated;
- (ii) whilst recognizing that there are anomalies in the present Act that require reform would strongly deprecate any move to increase the commercialization of Sunday by legislation;
- (iii) calls upon Christian individuals, Parochial Church Councillors and Synods of our Church to resist deregulation on both social and spiritual grounds.'

This powerful support of the motion obviously strengthens the hand of those who have to deal with the government, though it is also clear that the Church of England has little or no theological affirmations it can make about Sunday, and absolutely none which it can credibly press upon the government—the government remains pragmatic and quite unresponsive to theology.

- (b) Later on the Wednesday a private member's motion which had been slowly creeping up the list for years (yes, literally) finally made it just before the Synod was dissolved. This belonged to Peter Peterken, and was rightly claimed by him as 'radical':

'That this Synod whilst recognizing and upholding the biblical nature of the baptism of children of believing parents:

- (i) affirms that faith and repentance are required of persons to be baptized;
- (ii) acknowledges that our present practice creates many difficulties and obscures the full biblical significance of sacramental initiation;
- (iii) and therefore invites theologians, pastors and canon lawyers to explore the possibility of reviving the catechumenate in order that infants and others under instruction may identify with the Christian community until such time as they are ready to make a personal response to the gospel in Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Communion.'

The preamble (about the propriety of infant baptism) was an amendment added from the floor. The motion was interesting because it left uncertain how infants would have 'faith and repentance' (they can, of course, but not everyone can see it and there is a puzzle in juxtaposing the preamble with (i)). It was also interesting because (ii) begs considerable problems of definition. And it was also interesting because it suggests that infants are appropriate members of a 'catechumate' which surely requires at least both desire for admission to the people of God and the faculties to learn and 'echo back' (which is the meaning of 'catechumen',—and thus the motion shipped back in that which it was rejecting as its starting point. It was also interesting because the mover was unaware that COB had successfully moved in 1976 a Southwell diocesan motion:

'That this Synod . . . desires that there should be a re-examination of the conditions upon which infants are accepted for baptism.'

This motion, in COB's prejudiced opinion, makes the question of qualifications for infant baptism still technically *sub judice* in the Church of England. The standing committee had a report written by Bishop Knapp-Fisher, but never brought it before Synod. Anyway, COB missed this debate, through other business and being unclear it was coming up. And thus the defence fell instead upon the line taken by the Bishop of Knaresborough on behalf of his working party on children at communion—that is, that the Peterken motion was worth debating, but ought then to be withdrawn as it would cut across the immediate 'Knaresborough' agenda. (I can see that from Peterken's point of view that was not necessarily so, as his motion did not call for a change of practice but terminated upon 'theologians' etc). So he persevered. Someone called for a count by Houses: forty persons stood in their seats: and the bishops who had caught the Knaresborough drift duly did their duty. So the voting came out:

	Ayes	Noes
Bishops	2	15
Clergy	50	34
Laity	53	50

Thus at the end of it all, the Synod put nothing on record whatsoever. But the vote does indicate an unease about current infant baptismal practice, and Peter Peterken's problem was in failing to identify the problem sufficiently clearly to prescribe accordingly. But one day it will come . . . perhaps in connection with the response to the Lima document?

## THE KNARESBOROUGH REPORT

Whilst the date of publication is uncertain, it looks as though this report has crossed all its hurdles. It is unanimous. It takes nearly 100 pages of A4 in its duplicated form. It is entitled *Communion before Confirmation?* And, all being well, a copy will have reached the pan-Anglican Consultation in Boston, USA, which runs from 29 July to 1 August, before the reader reaches this point in *NOL!* Oh yes, and the recommendations are that children who are baptized and have the right kinds of parental support should be admitted (without fuss) to communion. And presumably the new General Synod will have this report before it in November, and will be asked then, or in February 1986, to send it down to the dioceses.

## HOUSE OF BISHOPS JUNE 1985

*NOL* apologizes for overlooking the minutes of a meeting of the House of Bishops on 4 June 1985. There were several liturgical items:

- 1 The House agreed to commend a text of 'A Service of Prayer and Dedication following a Civil Marriage Ceremony'. The text was apparently a revision done by some bishops of the text originally submitted by the Commission last September. Any diocesan bishop who wishes can then authorize it under Canon B.4 for his own diocese.
- 2 The Lent, Holy Week, and Easter services went down the same route. They also, it seems, had alterations made by the bishops incorporated. But we shall see. (We gather these texts will not be published until late Autumn at the earliest—certainly not in time for the Keble College presentations in September).
- 3 'Additions to the Calendar'—this was a topic on which the House of Bishops had a preliminary report from the Liturgical Commission. The point at issue was the question of adding saints and other worthies to the various league tables in the calendar. Three private members' motions in General Synod had proposed this treatment for Pusey, Temple, and Janani Luwum, and the House of Bishops shared the Liturgical Commission's concern lest this backdoor way in be followed. Thoughtfully, the movers of the various motions in General Synod had undertaken not to move until general principles should be established. This topic thus becomes one of the package of changes and improvements which are beginning to pile up for the era beyond 1990.
- 4 The Bishops also considered a paper about 'Common Law in Liturgy' by the chairman of the Liturgical Commission. It should be made clear that it was a strictly personal viewpoint of the chairman, who was pleading that, despite all attempts to tidy up and define the law in the Alternative Services Measure (1965) and the Worship and Doctrine Measure (1974), yet 'grey' areas still exist, and, for instance, variants from 1662 communion service, such as are used in our great cathedrals, are in reality covered neither by Rite B, nor by Canon B5 (which allows changes of no substantial importance to be made at the minister's discretion), but are first to be dubbed technically illegal, and thus be thrown out of the front door, and are then to be viewed as sanctioned by this blessed concept of 'common law', and are to be let in again through the back door. This 'common law' concept has not won the backing of the Commission thus far, and many members think B5 will suffice.

## ORDINATIONS THIS SUMMER

We have had slightly fewer reports this year, and of course we intend to be more sparing in comments on different dioceses' practice in future. We have not heard whether trousers have been restored to the ordination trousseau in Chichester. We have discovered that in London the priests had their hands anointed as part of the rite, though whether this should be classified as being 'clothed in their customary vesture' or alternatively as the presenting of 'symbols of the priest's office' (the two alternatives in the opening notes) is difficult to discern. General trends round the country appear to be:

- (i) the use of 1662 is at an end.
- (ii) 'concelebration' (that famous will 'o the wisp) is dying after its brief vogue.
- (iii) Bishops are still somewhat keen to sit on their chairs to ordain, which is a clear run-on of 1662 practice, and contrary to the mood, and up to a point of the rubrics, of the ASB Ordinal.

## SANCTUARY

This month has seen the end of a four-month period of 'sanctuary' in a North London Church by a Cypriot family resisting deportation as illegal immigrants. We do not enter into the rights and wrongs here, nor do we know how they (or the parish) were persuaded to put an end to the use of sanctuary—our limited interest lies in the question as to how far the secular authorities were ever persuaded that 'sanctuary' was a genuine right giving genuine protection, and how far they were simply indulging the church authorities out of charity or patience. It could affect future cases. Can any reader cast any further light?

## CONSECRATION OF THE EDITOR

It was a lovely sunny morning, and St. Paul's was just about full. Since the other bishop-designate was Wilfred Wood, the first black bishop of the Church of England, a large proportion of the congregation were West Indians. No calypsos, however; and no woozy choruses, either. In fact, we had two hymns by Charles Wesley, two from Roman Catholic sources, and finally, two Anglican. The eucharistic prayer was no. 3. Colin arrived in time for the beginning of the service and stayed to the end (though when he retired to put on episcopal garb, there was a long pause, and we began to wonder . . .).

It has already been pointed out that Colin is the first member of the Liturgical Commission to be consecrated at a service which he helped to write. Now he will soon be joined by David Hope (Wakefield). Two further possible candidates remain!

One criticism of the conduct of the service. The administration took half-an-hour. This could easily have been shortened by having the congregation file past the ministers. Also there was no Old Testament reading or psalm, though an evening psalm (134) was sung in Latin as an anthem.