

News of Liturgy

Editor Colin Buchanan

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Editorial

The liturgical news of January 1986 is the publication of *Lent, Holy Week, Easter: Services and Prayers* (Church House Publishing, Cambridge University Press, and SPCK—302 pp., £2.95 (softback), £12.50 (desk edition)) on 9 January. Their status is (almost) without precedent, though the rite published at the end of October for *Services of Prayer and Dedication after Civil Marriage* was a forerunner of it. The position is that the services are not, in the strict sense, 'authorized' at all. Instead they are 'commended' by the House of Bishops, following the one debate in the General Synod in February last year, and they are thus deemed to fall totally outside the requirements of the Canons. Any diocesan bishop—yes or, failing him, any incumbent—may give his own authorization for the services, so they will be lawful under whatever circumstances they are used. The actual form of words used in the Archbishop of Canterbury's foreword is:

'These Services and Prayers have been commended by the House of Bishops of the General Synod and are published with the agreement of the House.

'Under Canon B4 it is open to each Bishop to authorize, if he sees fit, the form of service to be used within his diocese. He may specify that the services shall be those commended by the House, or that a diocesan form of them shall be used. If the Bishop gives no directions in this matter the priest remains free, subject to the terms of Canon B5, to make use of the Services as commended by the House.'

The presumption behind all this is that the material can be used without any nod towards the 1662 Book, and that anything—inserts into the eucharist, the addition of new propers, the over-riding of existing lectionaries, and many other matters previously thought (as in the ASB) to require two-thirds in each House of the General Synod—can now be lawful simply on the Bishop's, or the incumbent's, say-so. It is a sufficient legal U-turn for me to think it worthwhile picking up elsewhere in this issue one particular expression of the extraordinary anomalies now imported into liturgical law.

However, at this point we are welcoming the services, rather than jumping on their legal standing. John Fenwick (he who did the Adrian Mole at the Keble demonstrations last September) has written again to review the published texts. Trevor Lloyd wrote his own Grove Worship Booklet (no. 93, *Celebrating Lent, Holy Week and Easter*) in November, and that is widely available. As I write I have both been to other dioceses for conferences to launch the materials, and also found myself advising parishes here in Birmingham. And my own Holy Week (which has been somewhat quiescent in my Theological College days) looks like having every possible variant in the new book to fulfil somewhere in the diocese between Palm Sunday and Easter Day. That will no doubt creep into my diary/scrapbook in April.

Along with the texts and the Lloyd Booklet, there is another weightier guide published to accompany them. This is by Michael Perham and Kenneth Stevenson: *Waiting for the Risen Christ—A Commentary on Lent, Holy Week, Easter: Services and Prayers* (SPCK, 114 pp., £3.95). Those who have come across the authors before (and they appear in these columns at intervals) will recognize that both have historical knowledge and both have a passionate concern to do things best to-day—but as a matter of fact, there is some evidence that they wrote chapters by a system of Stevenson for history, and Perham for practicalities. It has come out very well, and they discuss most helpfully the issue in the chairman's preface to the services—i.e. whether we are re-living or remembering the events. The title of the book subtly combines both theological perspectives—if we are 'waiting', then it is as if we were in Jerusalem on, e.g. that first Holy Saturday. But if we await 'the risen Christ' (rather than 'Christ's rising from the dead') then we stand as assured Christians, the right side of Easter even on Holy Saturday, and we cannot be as those who have not experienced his resurrection. Clearly the Christian celebration must lean towards the 'rememorative' whilst not entirely losing the varied experiences of desolation and hope which marked the disciples at that Jerusalem passover in 33 A.D. (or whenever). The book makes an interesting application of its preferred principle—we are warned off donkeys for Palm Sunday (pp.49-50), lest we attempt too great realism and forget the character of our celebration. But we are still caught—strung between two somewhat opposing principles. For when it comes to footwashing (pp.66-67) we are urged to make it 'a warm and human action of affection and service', and they think (unlike the notes to the service itself) that the president should do the substantial drying, not just a 'symbolic' touch.

Clearly the services become widely available at a stage which is a little late for planning for this year. What *NOL* would like to do is to have reflections from readers after the services have been used—particularly from those experimenting for the first time with some part of the provision. I think that on a rememorative view I am allowed to wish you all a happy Lent, though you must not lapse too quickly into alleluias—as they are reserved for more-than-rememorative occasions.

Colin Buchanan

KNARESBOROUGH LATEST

Since the Knaresborough report was debated in November in General Synod, it has been left with the House of Bishops to decide what to do with it. It seems likely now that this will take some time. And when they do decide, it looks increasingly unlikely that they will go straight to General Synod for a draft regulation to be approved. The dioceses themselves look certain to be involved, and that leads to a possibility that the diocesan bishops will each sound out his own diocese, by whatever means he sees fit, as a basis for deciding whether and how to take that regulation to Synod.

Whilst most of the above is frankly speculative, the absence of Knaresborough from the agenda of the February Synod is hard fact.

OTHER SYNODICAL BUSINESS

General Synod in February is to vote to extend the life of the ASB till 31 December 2000. At Final Approval this needs a two-thirds majority in each House. It would be spitting into the wind to try to stem it—but I still

think that I would have been voting against if I had been there, as I still believe that the forward-looking material in GS 698 cannot live well with this gesture re the ASB that 'no change' is the policy. Ah well!

We also have to hand a new (fifth) edition of *Public Worship in the Church of England*, published on 24 January by Church House Bookshop at 25p. It does not change the law at all, but it describes the position of the *Lent Holy Week Easter* provision and brings the lists of authorization up-to-date.

COB's LITURGICAL SCRAPBOOK

I am unsure how this new venture will go, and if it proves a problem in Birmingham I shall have to stop it. But I am aware that my life is including quite a variety of liturgical experiences which, if not exactly educative, are perhaps of passing interest. My problem is that I want to go and minister in many places in the months ahead without being treated as an investigative reporter before I ever arrive. Whilst I must retain my editorial rights, yet I would consider sympathetically letters which gave a different light on my own role in events mentioned. So—here goes for the last month:

December: (14) Eucharist etc. in Leicester in celebration of 25th anniversary of David Silk's priesting—preacher a previous curate of RDS, who tells us that if all returned to an old-fashioned catholic doctrine of priesthood the people would stream into our churches (it is only the lack of this doctrine which keeps them away)—Angelus and Mary conclude service—RDS stands at door and presents a souvenir card which says 'Pray brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God almighty' (something to do with almsgiving, I think, though an odd time to promote the concept). (15) Confirmation at Castle Vale—first time I have oiled candidates. (22) Ordination to LNSM priesthood of one of our (very few) black priests, Rolston Deson—I sit in congregation and enjoy it enormously. (24) Christmas Eve communion in vacant parish—strict 1662 rite to keep my hand in. (25) Christmas morning at Wyld Green, preaching and presiding—at end of (very joyful) eucharist, dancers come on for some home-grown dance-praise—and after that dozens of congregation come to the front and sing the Hallelujah Chorus together, just for fun—makes a happy Christmas celebration all round.

January: (4) Enthronement of Simon Barrington-Ward as new Bishop of Coventry—first such service I have attended with no welcomes scripted in text—also first with cross-headings of which first reads 'In the Ruins' (but that is true to Coventry—and it started to snow whilst the bishop's party was in the ruins)—acoustics in choir-stalls where visiting bishops are placed are appalling and sermon was incomprehensible (later the bishop's secretary sent through the text of the sermon with apologies so they must know about it), but the whole nave broke into spontaneous applause at the end of it—should sermons be thus received? (5) Confirmation in a Handsworth parish with something like three white candidates, seven afro-caribbeans, and seven Asians—it feels marvellous—also am presiding at evening eucharist for Anglican Evangelical Assembly, where for intercessions we turn chairs into circles and pray in groups. (11) My diocesan bishop rings on a Saturday to say he is unwell and can I cover Sunday for him: Morning I cannot, but in the afternoon there is the opening of newly developed lounge, halls, etc. built on three floors *inside* the

existing church building at St. Barnabas, Erdington and I am now to officiate at this—I visit the vicar and case the joint (most impressive) and get the service text and start the sermon (one reading chosen is 1 Kings 6, which not only describes a three-storey building, but even has its stairway on the South side—surely the parish did not build scripture into the architect's brief?). (12) Busy day—baptizing a clergy daughter in the morning (with celebration lunch)—visiting disgruntled parishioner complaining about her vicar's trendy services in early afternoon—opening new buildings as above at 4 p.m. (a pack-out and great élan—most memorable occasion)—and going on to preach and lay hands on at a healing service at 6.30. (14) First day conference on the *Lent, Holy Week, Easter* services in Liverpool—helps me to get my own mind further round possible uses, as the locals demonstrate some of their ways of adapting to particular buildings and resources—some persons appear out of sheer friendship to me, and rejoice the heart of the liturgical specialists who think they are evangelical converts to catholic interests...

This month's booklet . . .

is *Worship Series no. 94, Reading the Bible at the Eucharist*, by Michael Vasey. This provides some history, some very thorough discussion of the role of the reading of the Bible, and some comparison of lectionaries and the differing principles on which they are constructed. The immediate point of reference is the ASB eucharistic lectionary which particularly relates to Rite A. Thus this booklet joins the mini-series which ran from no. 75 to no. 80—re ceremonial, leadership, intercessions, preaching, and the kiss of peace at the eucharist—a sequence which followed publication of the ASB and kept Rite A firmly in view.

. . . and next month's

is *Pastoral Series no. 25, Folk Religion*, by Mark Silversides.

. . . and others are

Ethics Booklet no. 60, Key Themes in Roman Catholic Ethics, by Richard Higginson (January), and *Spirituality Series no. 16, Silence*, by David Runcorn (February).

. . . and reprints include

Liturgical Study no. 2, Language, Liturgy, and Meaning, by Anthony Thiselton, principal of St. John's College, Nottingham. This first appeared eleven years ago, and has been out of print for some time. It includes a discussion of linguistic principles, and also of theological semantics, and it relates these to liturgy. The new edition has a one-page appendix added to open up the question of 'inclusive' language.

. . . and a catalogue

should be enclosed with this issue.

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Review

Lent, Holy Week, Easter: Services and Prayers, (Church House Publishing, CUP, SPCK, 1986).

Freed from the hazards of line-by-line revision on the floor of General Synod, the outgoing Liturgical Commission has produced a handy and attractive set of services. The pew edition (costing £2.95) is the same size as a standard ASB, but less than half the thickness. The typeface of the main text is very similar to that of the ASB (though the page numbers are mercifully larger than the ASB first edition) and the rubrics are actually in red. The main practical drawback of this size volume is that, being softback, it will not lie open—clergy will be well advised to go straight for the larger version (despite its price of \$12.95) for liturgical use.

With regards to content, the worshipper familiar with current Roman Catholic usage will find a number of old friends here; the worshipper totally ignorant of what RCs get up to will probably find the provision imaginative and refreshingly different. One of the most encouraging features is the provision of brief introductions to many of the services, sketching in a little of the historical background, giving a little gentle advice about presentation, and showing a concern with creating the appropriate atmosphere—the ASB looks rather bald in comparison.

Potentially controversial areas are handled with sensitivity: the Imposition of Ashes is imaginatively placed between the Confession and the Absolution, thus becoming an enactment of one's repentance: the old 'Veneration of the Cross' on Good Friday is entitled 'The Proclamation of the Cross'—a name which should defuse at least some Protestant suspicions and encourage a positive exploration of the possibilities.

The language is in the main rather more evocative than the ASB—the Frost version of the Confession is widely used, and sections like the Exultet, the Services of Penitence, and the Prayers on the Passion are quite moving. There is much here that can be used for private devotion as well as corporate worship (not that the feel is at all introspective and pietistic—on Palm Sunday we are bidden to pray 'for those who still make Jerusalem a battle-ground').

There are a few sections which I find less than totally satisfactory; while I like the Palm Sunday procession, I am not sure that the average congregation will understand why the rest of the service is dominated by a lengthy reading of the Passion Narrative ('We haven't got there yet!'); the Footwashing needs a scripted introduction similar to that preceding the ashing; and I am unhappy with the modified Roman formulae over the bread and cup ('Blessed are you, Lord, God of the universe...') before the Eucharistic Prayer in the Maundy Thursday rite. But these are relatively minor points: the services are self-confessedly a quarry for material and are not necessarily to be slavishly followed as printed. A sensitive, imaginative congregation should find them a great enrichment of their celebration of the Lord's passion and triumph.

John Fenwick

ABSOLUTION AND THE LAW

One of the extras in *Lent Holy Week Easter* is a new form of absolution. It is to be found on page 56 and it runs as follows:

A FORM OF ABSOLUTION which may be used for the quieting of the individual conscience

God, the Father of all mercies,
through his Son Jesus Christ
forgives all who truly repent and believe in him:
by the ministry of reconciliation
which Christ has committed to his Church,
and in the power of the Spirit,
I declare that you are absolved from your sins,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

As a preliminary to checking this one out by the law, readers should note that it is a provision to be used in private for the benefit of the 'individual conscience'. The House of Bishops is 'commending' (see Editorial for text) this form for this use.

Now I return to past history when different absolutions (of a more controversial nature) were before the Synod. At that time (February 1981) I tabled a question to the secretary-general which, with its reply, came out as follows:

Question: Is it permissible for a priest of the Church of England to minister absolution to a penitent privately with any form of words he chooses under Canon B5(2)?

Answer: Canon B5(2) relates to occasions for which no provision is made in The Book of Common Prayer. Given the provision for this ministry in The Book of Common Prayer, I do not think that the priest is free to use any form of words he chooses under Canon B5(2), but is caught by Canon B1.

Question (supplementary by COB): Can the Secretary-General tell us what provision is made in The Book of Common Prayer for private absolution of healthy penitents?

Answer (by Secretary-General to supplementary): ... I cannot see anything actually in the words of the form either of confession or absolution which in fact says anything about the person concerned being sick.

We leave aside the context (according to which the person is about to die), and simply note the platform policy, which was then (so it seemed) simply determined to get a particular form through Synod. This was backed up by the registrar's 'Legal Opinion' in February 1983. Now it has all melted by the snows in Spring. What sunny influences have thus warmed the Synod's officers to allow them to permit the House of Bishops to commend the new text with the words reprinted in our editorial on page 1?

COB

AIDS AND THE CUP

I am reluctant to write about this as any mention of it seems to increase alarms, however reassuring the text may be. At the time of writing the Board of Social Responsibility of the General Synod is preparing material on it. I am told that in parts of London whole congregations refuse to receive the cup, but instead are using intinction—but I see no sign of that in Birmingham. And of course my own original approach was to note how healthy are the Church of England clergy and how long-lived (ask the Pensions Board), although they have been 'finishing up' for hundreds of people and over scores of years in any one ministry. So in general there is a likelihood that not much infection is passed this way.

Now the matter needs closer investigation. There is some evidence that alcohol has a neutralizing effect on many germs, and (though to a lesser extent) the same may be true of silver vessels. But the crucial matter is that the AIDS virus is passed from bloodstream to bloodstream, and therefore anyone with a cut on the lip or inside the mouth ought to be given communion by intinction. AIDS sufferers themselves, who are open to many kinds of infection without defences in their metabolism, must not sip from the cup for their own sakes as well as others.

So—I shall keep my eyes open, and the diocese here may have something to say about being sensible. But I expect to go on 'finishing up' without a pang for the rest of my years.

LITURGY IN HARDY TIME AND COUNTRY

In Dorchester this year they have been doing an equivalent of Oberammergau—a survey of nineteenth century history in the area, done with a full cast of modern Dorchester people. The play is called *Entertaining Strangers*, and is written by David Edgar, and produced in St. Mary's Church, Dorchester. One of the two central characters is the Rev. Henry Moule, who was vicar of Fordington in the mid-nineteenth century. Henry Moule (like his later namesakes) was a strong evangelical, and he took his church duties seriously. Here—so we gather—the matter is well-researched, so we get the following sequences:

MOULE: Right, Mr. Clerk. A Christening?

BROOKS: Yes, sir.

MOULE: This is the couple?

PARENTS: Parson/Sir.

MOULE: And these the godparents?

GODPARENTS: Afternoon/All right, Parson?

MOULE: (*suspicious*): Then let us proceed.

Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin—um, Mr. Clerk?

BROOKS: Sir?

MOULE: There is no water.

BROOKS: Water, sir?

(*BROOKS laughs, It's infectious—caught by the others*).

MOULE: Why is the matter so diverting?

BROOKS: Lawks, sir, last parson bisn't bothering with no water for no christening. He spit on his old hand, and 'noint the babe with that.

ASB EUCHARISTIC LESSONS INDEX

One of the several indexes the ASB does not have is an index to the Bible passages set out between pages 398 and 978. John Hayden of Ipswich has produced one on his computer, and we are publishing this, in ASB-page format, month by month from now on. You are invited to cut out or photo the first section below, tuck it in your ASB, and await next month's to build up a complete index.

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