

# News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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## Editorial

### THE RECONCILIATION OF A PENITENT

We are having great difficulty in this issue of *NOL* in coping with the General Synod timetable. Synod meets from 23 to 26 February, and, although the documents have only been coming out since February began, and we can only mention them now, yet decisions will have been taken before readers see this issue. The method of reporting therefore has to be largely predictive, with a line added at proof to report the outcome.

However, there is one Synod document of some interest to these columns, which is not being debated this session, and can therefore be reviewed under less pressure. I refer to 'GS Misc 258', *The Reconciliation of a Penitent: A Report by Professor John MacQuarrie* (Church House Bookshop, 7 pp, 75p). To understand this production, one has to go back a little. After the debacle with the Commission's services in February 1983, the Rev. Terry Knight put in a Private Member's Motion, which was finally adopted in the following form in November 1984:

'That this Synod requests the Doctrine Commission to prepare and publish a report examining the theology and current practice of *The Reconciliation of a Penitent* in order to assist the Synod in any future consideration of this matter.'

Well, what has happened? The Standing Committee noticed too late that the Synod is not supposed to ask the Doctrine Commission to do anything, but intervened, and gave the task to a one-man working party, Professor John MacQuarrie. This is a cheap, and fairly low-key, way of solving the Synod's problems, *providing it does solve them*. But, before we look at the actual report, I cannot help but note that the issue was carried in Synod as highly divisive, and that surely suggested that opposing views should meet and hammer out their differences. Instead, the matter is referred to a fine theologian, somewhat 'Catholic' in his own stance, who is apparently sublimely unaware of the divisions there have been in the Church of England on this issue. Indeed, it is not unlikely that he never discovered why the Standing Committee had asked him to do the job, and he writes his less-than-3000 words almost as a scholar who will give some basic information to ignorant souls who ask for it, but deep down cannot understand why they could not find basic information for themselves. Their controversies have barely impinged on him, though a whisper of hearsay has reached him, telling him some good folk are unhappy about 'Ego te absolvo' – but this is clearly so odd a stance to take that he is not disposed to take it very seriously.

Who knows whose fault it was? Technically, I should think it lies with the Standing Committee – they must have failed to brief their man. But

their man is also unhelpful. I list his omissions of material which cried out for investigation and resolution:

- 1 John 20.23 is cited in passing, but not discussed – insofar as its significance can be discovered, it appears to relate to baptism.
- 2 The development of the rite of the 'Sacrament of Penance' is handled very skimpily.
- 3 The development of the formula 'Ego te absolvo' is not mentioned.
- 4 The introduction of the equivalent words into the Ordinal is also omitted.
- 5 The medieval excesses are virtually omitted.
- 6 In respect of the English Reformation 'no specific liturgical form for the reconciliation of a penitent was included in the Prayer Book' (para 8, page 4) – which certainly makes total nonsense of the platform answers I got from the Secretary-General, and the 'Legal Opinion' the whole Synod got from the Registrar, in the years 1981-83. He stays on general absolutions, and only mentions the office for the visitation of the sick in passing.
- 7 He virtually omits mention of the famous 'warning exhortation', and does not discuss the meaning of successive changes of wording.
- 8 He believes that when the Oxford Movement people revived the sacrament of penance 'in the absence of any specific Anglican liturgical form, it was usual to make use of the form current in the Roman Catholic Church' – which would have surprised Pusey and co., as they *thought* they were reviving a Prayer Book use, and would have been flummoxed to be told that they were reviving the rite on no Anglican grounds at all.
- 9 Professor MacQuarrie thinks that the psychological climactic moment of release is not in fact 'Ego absolvo', but is 'Your sins are forgiven'. If this is true, it detracts from the weight placed by Anglican Catholics on 'Ego absolvo'.
- 10 Marvellously, the author next offers us a programme 'Now that the practice of making confession and hearing absolution is so widespread in the Anglican Communion, it is natural that thought should be given to drawing up an appropriate liturgical form' (para 9, page 5). Apparently we should observe that the Roman Church is revising its rites, and also see how ECUSA 'has already taken a lead' and provided an Anglican rite. Certainly, on reading this spur to good works, one is led to think the Church of England should try to do the same. It all reads like a pious exhortation to English swimmers to learn to swim the Channel *now*, before somebody else goes and beats us to it. There may be batty old ladies who think that way, but you would not give them the job of modern sports reporting.
- 11 If we spell this out in monosyllables, it seems that the expert the Standing Committee has commissioned is totally and sublimely unaware that the Commission drew up a rite in 1980, from which two members dissented; he is totally unaware of the various rounds

of controversy as this went through Synod; he certainly cannot know *why* it was controversial, though he has heard (page 6), as though in news from afar, that some disagreement exists about the form of the 1662 absolution from the visitation of the sick – but he thinks 'this controversy has no real substance in it' (and he is unaware it relates to any recent attempts to write new services); he has not read the debates in the *Proceedings* of Synod; he has never met the 'Legal Opinion'; he knows nothing of the voting in February 1983 nor of the issues which touched that end. As he never knew the modern rite has ever existed, he could hardly have believed reports of its demise. Instead, as we have seen above, he suggests we make a start on the matter!

- 12 He makes one point of liturgical principle about the 'Ego absolvo'. He thinks it is no more 'arrogant sacerdotalism' than is 'I baptize you in the name . . .' Again, he has not engaged with the argument. The parallel with 'I absolve you (in the name of the Lord)' is *not* 'I baptize you . . .' but instead that which we have never seen, and would find totally unacceptable, namely 'I regenerate you in the name . . .' That argument must be fairly mounted – and, if it is, then the phrase 'arrogant sacerdotalism' must be pondered.
- 13 The final omission is that he seems as unaware of the agreed and 'commended' absolution in *Lent Holy Week Easter* as he is of every controversy in the Synod prior to it.

Such are the naiveties to which such a scholarly and benevolent innocent has delivered us. I would not have thought such innocence possible in an Anglican Professor of Theology to-day. But, granted that he has revealed his innocence, why did nobody on the Standing Committee notice how wholly useless the report is and decline to publish it? I supported Terry Knight's motion: I would have dearly liked some real engagement with the issues thrown up by the previous debates: instead, we seem to be having a poetry-reading between rounds in a heavyweight boxing match – and the poet has been brought in since the bell closed the last round, and has not been told it is a boxing audience he is addressing, but thinks he is in the Oxford Schools with a studious but unpugnacious audience. How could either the promoter or the poet himself get him into such an unreal fix?

If we did truly engage, there are questions about the actual pastoral usefulness and appropriateness of the sacrament of penance described. It is certainly not a major feature of the spirituality of 99% of Anglican lay worshippers, and no amount of matches under damp wood ever seems to create a blaze. Perhaps it is not where the fire of love for Christ ought primarily to be lit.

I am away in Canada from 2 to 17 March, and would appreciate not having too great a postbag to which to return. I visit Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver and Victoria, often lecturing on the new Canadian *Book of Alternative Services* which I hope to get to know much better in the process. There will be copies of this available again at Nottingham when I get back.

Colin Buchanan

## GENERAL SYNOD FEBRUARY 1987

The boring feature of liturgy in the February Synod is the Rite B stuff (including Collects), on which see our January edition. The politically interesting one is the scope of the legislation about the ordination of women – all contained in the report from the House of Bishops (GS 764). This is being debated on Thursday morning 26 February. It is unanimous – not thereby committing the House to unanimous support for the ordination of women, but indicating its agreement to the proposition 'If it is to happen, it were best it should happen this way'. What way? Why, by making minimal provision for disruption, and maximum provision for a slow freezing out of those unable to accept the ordination of women. If a transition begins, then it must be allowed to continue until the new situation is well established.

STOP PRESS: on 24 February, the Synod decided to consider the Rite B material and passed to next business; and on 26 February accepted the House of Bishops' proposals about the legislation concerning the ordination of women by: Bishops 32-8; Clergy 135-70; Laity 150-67.

### This month's booklet . . .

. . . is Pastoral Series no. 30, *Healing Encounters in the City*, by Martin Wallace, Rural Dean of Newham, in the East End of London. The ministry of healing has not figured largely in the Pastoral Series, and part of what the author records is, no doubt, overlapping with the liturgical. But there is a great reality to what he here sets out, both as story and as source for reflection upon pastoral practice.

### . . . and next month's

is Joint Liturgical Study no. 1 (Grove Lit. Stud. no. 49), *Daily and Weekly Worship – from Jewish to Christian*, by Roger Beckwith. This is a notable publication, as it is the first in the new series of Liturgical Studies, which are set in a different typeface, and bound with a narrow spine – and cost £2.50 each. This Study brings together two articles the author wrote three years ago for *Evangelical Quarterly*, revises them slightly, and makes them available to a worldwide readership. Their theme is the Jewish context within which Christian worship arose.

### . . . and an omission this month

is Spirituality Series no. 20, *Prayer and my Personality*, by Ian Williams. This was advertised in the catalogue, but, almost uniquely in the fifteen and more years of monthly booklets, was not ready on time. Thus it will be distributed with the March mailing, and Standing Order invoices etc. are being adjusted accordingly. We do apologize.

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## KEN WHITE — A CORRECTION

Haste (always our undoing) led to an unchecked reference in our obituary to Ken White last month — that is, despite what we said, he was *not* the architect for the reordering of St. Nich's Durham. We apologize to all in the know.

## ECUMENICAL RELATIONS MEASURE AND CANONS

The response from the dioceses has been very favourable for this set of legislative provisions. They came before the General Synod on the Tuesday of Synod week for 'Final Drafting' stage, after which they will come again in July for Final Approval. At Final Drafting they were approved by large majorities.

If all goes well, after Final Approval they will go to Parliament. Parliament, however, is in recess from July to November. It will then take some time to find Parliamentary time, and it would be unwise to assume that the Measure could come before Parliament until February 1988 at the earliest. Indeed, if there is an election between now and November (and most people apart from Mrs. Thatcher think it likely) then there will at the outset of a new Government (of whatever shade or mixture of shades) be no Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament and hence no machinery for steering a Measure into the Houses or out of them. Forming an Ecclesiastical Committee is unlikely to be at the forefront of government concerns, and thus it could be much longer before Parliamentary Approval than could be desired. Such are some of the attendant problems of being shackled to a secular Parliament.

The Measure itself, once implemented, would permit areas to be designated Local Ecumenical Projects under an instrument made by a diocesan bishop. There has to be a scheme attached to the designation which provides for a pattern of worship, not by any means strictly Anglican or conducted by strictly Anglican ministers. This in turn opens up great possibilities . . . *NOL* will be reverting to this as the prospects for the Measure and Canons are more closely discernible.

## ASB EUCHARISTIC LESSONS INDEX — adjustments not noted in *NOL*

### March 1986 issue

*Add* Matthew 8.14-17 p931  
13.15-end should read 54-end  
16.24-36 should read 24-26

### April 1986 issue

Matthew 28.16-end add p629 and p869  
Mark 10.13-16 add p215  
10.38-end delete p877  
10.42-45 add p877  
Luke 2. 1-14 p447 add '(15-20)'  
*Add* 2. 8-20 p448  
*Add* 2.41-end p456  
10. 1-9 add p956 (noted in May issue)  
*Add* 10. 1-12 p662  
12.35-44 delete '956 8' (noted in May issue)  
*Delete* 14. 1-3 p935  
*Delete* 21.41-end p456 (this should have been 2.41-end — see above)  
22.24-27 delete p956 (noted in May issue)

### May 1986 issue

Luke 23.29-46 should read 39-46

## WOMEN DEACONS

The House of Bishops has now clarified its pronouncements of October on deacons officiating at weddings. The Minutes of the meeting of the House of 3 February 1987 include the following:

### *'Deacons: Authority to Conduct Marriage Services*

The House gave further consideration to some of the practical implications of the decision of principle, taken at the October 1986 meeting, that where a deacon solemnizes a marriage, as is permissible under statute law, he or she may pronounce the blessing of the couple, for which the authorized rites provide. The House agreed that, as hitherto, deacons should not normally be expected to solemnize marriages in the first year following ordination. The normal practice of the Church would continue to be that a priest, if present, should solemnize the marriages. In cases where a deacon officiates it is right, as an exception to general practice, for the deacon, having solemnized the marriage, to pronounce the nuptial blessing. But in respect of the final blessings for which provision is made in the Marriage Services, the deacon should follow the normal practice of using the "us" (rather than the "you") form.

The House asked that the Liturgical Commission should give consideration to the drafting of suitable amendments or additions to the Notes for Series 1 Solemnization of Matrimony and the ASB Marriage Service.

It looks as though we have some splendidly hair-splitting casuistry about diaconal blessings underlying this. Perhaps we now have the amusing possibility looming that a deacon (or at least a deacon of one year's standing) *can* after all give a blessing in 'you' form — but only to a maximum of two persons! The limitation is not on the form, but on the number of recipients at any one time. Perhaps deacons' blessing are slightly thinner than priests' or bishops' ones, and therefore cannot be spread so far. Should the bishops perhaps have forbidden a deacon to officiate at a double wedding, lest the blessing cannot meet the needs of four people at once? I hope the Liturgical Commission declines to amend texts — in 1974 and after, we all had the advice that deacons could officiate at weddings and the ASB text was drafted in that consciousness.

And, as *NOL* is printed, the first women deacons have emerged — a report next month.

## COB's LITURGICAL SCRAPBOOK

**January:** (18) a rare chance in the morning simply to preach at a parish eucharist, and do nothing else; in the evening there is a Shirley Council of Churches special service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity — I am (inevitably, it seems) the preacher, but again do not otherwise have to take responsibility for the service; (21) horror of horrors, I missed a school service for Unity Week, and confess it here as it was public enough when I forgot to show up . . . in the evening St. Agnes Moseley is celebrating St. Agnes' Day (which I think I have never kept before), and celebrating it with the dedication of new furnishings — notably a new Communion Table in memory of a much-loved warden, but with a re-ordering of various other parts of the interior — the liturgy (over which I preside) includes parading round these re-ordered parts and use of

texts written partly by the incumbent, partly by me, — one of his contributions comes at the font where I say 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them (etc.)' and he has given the congregation the line 'See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized?' I suggest to him that the fact that they have already been baptized is an impeccable answer to the question, and he agrees, but thinks the question has a more general, rhetorical, and liturgical air to it — so it stands: (25) the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul finds me (against my better judgment about my own limitations) preaching at a Family Service in St. Paul's Dosthill, and I worm my way out of trouble by getting a crowd of kids to enact the Damascus Road sequence in the centre aisle (with the whole congregation giving a clap of the hands to represent the light from heaven); in the evening there is the 25th anniversary of the daughter church of the parish in which I live — a strictly 1662 one — where I am to preach at the 1662 Evensong which marks the event, and the Rector, in welcoming me, points out that the photos of the dedication by Leonard Wilson in 1962 show that good bishop in gaiters, which he doubts if I will imitate — I unashamedly concur (even for a 1662 service): (27) I attend a lunch-time celebration of the eucharist in the chapel of our General Hospital, along with Matron and the Rite B celebrant, and, no doubt, the angels and archangels: (29) evening confirmation and communion in the countryside — but with *Mission Praise* and much liveliness: (30) the Feast of Charles, King and Martyr, and I am in Bishop Hugh's chapel for early eucharist, enlivened by an account of the martyrdom in Whitehall: (31) off to Belfast for three days in Ulster . . .

**February:** (1) St. Brigid's Day in the Irish Calendar, but she does not obtrude on my doings — in the morning I preach at the Church of Ireland chaplaincy at Queen's University, and have my first live experience of the Irish 1984 *Alternative Prayer Book (APB)* using the main eucharistic rite but with the appended Australian eucharistic prayer (if this puzzles you, write in). As the preacher I note what I had not noticed reviewing the Book, that the readings (following the ASB lectionary) are set out in their NIV form — a great gain compared with England — and I also have opportunity (as I am ministering the cup) to watch young parents breaking the bread they receive and handing on part to their children (the chaplain tells me this is wholly on the initiative of the families concerned and not through his encouragement); in the early evening I preach at St. Augustine of Canterbury, Belvoir, at a kind of young people's eucharist loosely related to the *APB* and using the primary eucharistic prayer (so now in one Sunday I have tried both) — the Rector slips in 'You know we have been having conversions here, so soon there will be confirmation — and we have a visiting bishop here to-night as a kind of visual aid to get us ready for when our own bishop comes' — which sounds to me like the classic cardboard cut-out role — but the service is joyfully free, even if slightly unnerving in its unpredictability (one problem to me is understanding what the well-dialected Rector is actually saying to me . . .), and after that I go back for a late night prayer and praise at the chaplaincy, at which I follow the coffee-break (an unusual feature of liturgy) and raise questions, then indulge in question-and-answer: (2-3) it is all about liturgy, but not at it — lectures in Dublin and Belfast on baptism, confirmation, and children at communion . . . : (5) off to London to participate

for the first time in the consecration of another bishop — the new Bishop of Shrewsbury in the diocese of Lichfield, next-door to Birmingham — at Westminster Abbey, and the rite has some minor interesting surprises — one being the preacher, who is a black South African priest from the Birmingham diocese, so Bishop Hugh and I sit and listen to him preaching to us on the role of a bishop (and a very good sermon it is — first ever by a black preacher at an English consecration? — no, because Misaeri Kauma of Uganda preached for Simon Barrington-Ward); another surprise comes to the Archbishop's Registrar who has to read out that John Dudley Davies is currently 'Incumbent of the Grouped Parishes of Llan-rhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr, Pennant, Hirnant, and Llangynog' (though he does slightly better than the army sergeant who, during my National Service in that area, with respect to the last named, gulped, swallowed, and blurted out 'Lanny-nig-nog'); and another surprise comes at the laying on of hands — there is a rugby scrum of English (and, for obvious reasons, Welsh) bishops accompanying the Archbishop's laying on of his hands and praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit, but then the special guests — Bishop Rore Furberg of the Swedish island diocese of Visby and Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of the Church of South India (and, of course, of Winson Green, Birmingham) — come up and have a separate laying on of hands in silence with the rest of us standing back before the Archbishop continues the consecration prayer — and this raises all sorts of high-flown liturgical questions in my mind — is it a general ecumenical practice? (but Lesslie Newbigin, who has been a bishop nearly forty years, tells me in the changing rooms afterwards that he has never seen this before), or is it a carefully orchestrated way of ensuring that the valued ecumenical touch is not crowded out by the English front row forwards as they go hard into the scrum? (but if this is the point, why not station the ecumenical bishops in front of the English ones when the scrum first forms?) — and another second order question relates to who has authority so to order it — was it an Abbey functionary, or an archiepiscopal staff member, or a Crockford's watchdog, or even the Archbishop himself? — we must await further light: (6) back to Bishop Hugh's chapel in the early morning — and it is Her Majesty's Accession Day, so the rite is 1662 (with full decalogue and monarchical prayers) and the garb is black chimere with doctoral hood — quite a period piece: (8) in the morning there are baptisms, confirmations, and communion at the Quinton, enlivened by testimony from a young married couple who are being confirmed together (and first turned to Christ through marriage enquiry there), which I provide should come after the collect and before the readings, thus enabling me to slip references to the testimonies into my sermon; and at 4 p.m. there is a re-run of the Institution service for Tony Greenfield who was robbed by snow on 16 January (see last month's *NOL*), and, by minimal doctoring, the text now confirms him in office rather than installs him there — he is by way of being a liturgist (reads *NOL*), and has carefully negotiated with me four worthwhile variants on our usual diocesan Institution service, each of which I will now take to our diocesan committee, so I am pleased to have a chance to try it out 'on the ground', and want also to give him good marks — also the church is packed: (9-11) off for three days of Retreat-cum-Conference with POT, and of offices and eucharist for which I am only once directly responsible — very good to be relieved of driving the bus . . .