

News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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Editorial

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS IN WATER

I have been asked by one or two readers to amplify the passing references I have made in my 'Scrapbook' (and in Worship Booklet no. 91, *Adult Baptisms*) to offering certain categories of persons the possibility of the renewal of baptismal vows *with submersion*. Now the subject has been dignified by a debate in the House of Bishops. Their minute 12 of the meeting on 21 October 1987 reads as follows:

Baptismal Practice

The House had before it a paper prepared, at the request of the Standing Committee of the House, by the Bishop of Guildford. After discussion, the House agreed:

- (a) To consult with the CCC (Council for the Care of Churches) and Chancellors to ensure that wherever there is to be a font which provides for baptism by immersion or submersion, it should also be readily usable for baptism by affusion.
- (b) To encourage bishops at baptisms and confirmations to make the most of the symbolism, especially ensuring a plentiful use of water and the close inter-relationship of vows and the threefold baptism; and to encourage clergy to follow such practice in their baptisms.
- (c)
 - (i) To ask the Liturgical Commission to consider again the renewal of baptismal vows, and perhaps to prepare a more significant and dramatic rite than that provided in the ASB.
 - (ii) The Commission might also consider some rite for the restoration of the lapsed.
 - (iii) Meanwhile it may be appropriate not to encourage or countenance some unofficial practices which appear to be a renewal of *baptism*.
- (d) To remind clergy and lay people that the earliest Christian practice was baptism by immersion, rather than by submersion, which appears to be the preferred option today.

This is a mighty set of findings by the House of Bishops. As I want to comment especially upon the renewal of baptismal vows, I must not comment too freely on everything else. However the last paragraph tempts me out of my corner. It seems clear now that the House of Bishops is using 'immersion' to mean 'standing in water, which is then poured over the candidate' and 'submersion' to mean 'dunking'. If this is the case, then one must point out:

- (a) This is a private linguistic use of the House – all Baptists and Brethren have always called 'dunking' 'immersion' (and it is possible that I must myself bear some responsibility for popularizing the word 'submersion' in liturgical language, as I have steadfastly rejected the word 'immersion' for a word which means the *same* but has more

popular usage). (We all know what an 'immersion heater' is – and it is right in and under the water . . .) In disavowing the use of 'immersion' I was never expecting it to crop up used in some different sense, as a variant on affusion, and thus distinguishable from 'dunking'.

- (b) The bishops treat 'dunking' as a present 'preferred option'. They seem to be ignorant of the fact that it is the first prescribed alternative in the rubrics of the BCP and the ASB. It is *not* a bright private idea someone has had – it is the official use of the Church of England passed by the House of Bishops (among others) less than ten years ago. If I understand aright what the House of Bishops means by 'immersion' (on which see (a) above), then it must be stated that it is without mention in the rubrics, without provision in Anglican baptismal architecture, and without much point either in relation to the stated need.
 - (c) I am astonished to find that the House of Bishops *knows* what 'earliest Christian practice' was. So I hope they are not going to branch out into the public arena armed with esoteric information to which the rest of us do not have access. Let us take 'earliest' seriously – then the House of Bishops knows that apostolic practice was. (What there is, of course, is a likely fourth century and subsequent practice in which candidates stood in water and water was poured over them, or, possibly, they immersed their heads – but 'earliest', no . . .)
 - (d) The practice recommended does not meet the pastoral need. Those who want to be submerged want to be submerged, and are unlikely to be amenable to unproven assertions about 'earliest Christian practice'. The impulse towards submersion is threefold – firstly, the death, burial, and resurrection motif of Romans 6; secondly, the desire for a total swamping as an experienced symbol of total commitment; and thirdly, the desire for a baptism recognizable and respected by those being baptized as adults in the Baptist, Brethren, and Pentecostalist denominations. That is where the pastoral need is. Who will say that the three aspects of the desire are so ungodly that candidates should be argued out of them? On the contrary, I would still maintain that the provisions of the rubric mean that all adults coming to baptism ought to be shown the rubrics, and be offered a choice of submersion or affusion. Candidates may well not want submersion, but, where they do, they respond to the first option in the rubrics. Who are the pastors who are to argue them out of it? The pastor's task is rather to find ways of *providing* it . . . (And it is the ultimate logic of 'a plentiful use of water', surely?).
- Having got that out of my system, I pick up the renewal of baptismal vows. Apparently the House of Bishops is fearful lest such a rite may imply a renewal of baptism itself (c) (iii). It is not clear what error is thus excluded by their statement, but perhaps the House fears lest to 'renew' one's baptism is the same as 're-iterating' it. That would not be my view, and I have used the phrase 'renewal of your baptism' at some renewal of baptismal vows events, without any possibility that it could be misunderstood. However, once I knew that some folk distrusted the phrase, I changed it, and I now say on such occasions: 'NN, as you have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, so now I dip you in this water in commemoration of that baptism and in

renewal of its meaning for you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. This is a slight change from the formula in Booklet no. 91, but perhaps prudent if 'renewal of baptism' is thought to produce a theological headache.

Thus, on the House of Bishops' understanding, I join that House of Bishops in deprecating practices 'which appear to be a renewal of baptism'. If they think 'renewal' means 'repetition', I am with them. In my view, water can only be used at the renewal of baptismal vows with careful safeguards. I suggest the following:

- (i) There must be careful preparation of candidates, so that they acknowledge they are already baptized.
- (ii) There must be careful explanation in the preaching.
- (iii) There must be careful distinguishing between baptism and the renewal of baptismal vows in the liturgical presentation (and my formula above is an instance of this – and certainly any such renewal of vows must not be physically mixed up with actual baptisms).
- (iv) There should be proper documentation – including a certificate for each candidate, carrying the date and place of original baptism, and those of renewal of baptismal vows. I endeavour to get a loose page added to the baptismal register also, held by a paper-clip, and thus, without disturbing the baptismal register itself, giving evidence as to the rite used.

So, if the Liturgical Commission is to 'prepare a more significant and dramatic rite' for the renewal of baptismal vows, they could do much worse than look at the use of submersion.

This is where the pastoral need is, and the minutes of the House do not touch on that point. There are many who were baptized as infants who would now readily leave the Church of England and have baptism *ab initio*. Some of them can be contained by submersion with renewal of vows. A rationale is ready to hand for this. It would be astonishing if the Church of England were ready to be flexible to the point of abolishing all principles when admitting to baptism the infants of non-worshippers – but is wholly unready to be flexible towards the tender conscience of some of her own best children, when meeting that tenderness involves no surrender of principles at all. I say 'it would be', but fortunately that is not the case. On what I think to be the Bishops' understanding of 'renewal of baptism' I too would abjure it. A charitable reading of the minutes of the House would suggest they are tacitly in favour of the practices I have described as my own, and that is a relief.

As we go to press I have received Gordon Kuhrt's book, *Believing in Baptism* (Mowbray, 186 pages, £5.95) to be published on 26 November (and, we hope, to be reviewed in these columns next month). Gordon discusses what I have elsewhere called 'liturgical and sacramental brinkmanship', and concludes that as long as we practise somewhat indiscriminating infant baptism, with the full liturgical reference to the riches of God's salvation thus conveyed, so long must we be ready for a pressure for the renewal of baptismal vows with submersion. He concludes (page 160), 'Should the church lose some of its best members over this issue?'

I suppose I am left wondering how much homework the House of Bishops did before voting on the motions agreed by the House. Perhaps we need the Bishop of Guildford's paper to be made public.

Colin Buchanan

GENERAL SYNOD NOVEMBER 1987

Whilst the main press attention in Synod was upon the great debate on sexuality and sexual expression (concerning which NOL irrelevantly congratulates the Bishop of Chester, and Peter Forster who strengthened the Chester amendment, on finding a firm and clear and biblical point of rallying for an almost unanimous vote in Synod), there was one matter of liturgical concern on the agenda, to which we drew attention last month. Terry Knight moved a Private Member's Motion:

'In view of the Report by Professor John MacQuarrie entitled *The Reconciliation of a Penitent GS Misc 258* the Synod requests the House of Bishops to reintroduce "A form for the Reconciliation of a Penitent GS 530" at the earliest opportunity.'

It is worth noting that no 'view' of the MacQuarrie report would ever tell you that GS 530 never existed. Terry Knight apparently said that an official form was needed as the old Prayer Book did *not* provide a rite for reconciliation (what a turnabout compared with 1981-83, when the platform argument was that it *does* provide so, and so the new proposal is an 'alternative' service . . .!). The logic of all this will need investigating. And, finally, we note that Michael Seward moved an amendment which would simply have asked the House of Bishops to consider what to do – and lost it by 159 votes to 146, before the unamended motion was carried on a show of hands. NOL's editor got a mention or two in the debate (as did our editorial on the MacQuarrie document earlier this year), but those responsible for acting on the Knight motion must remember that it was not COB who defeated the rite in February 1983 – it was the House of Laity.

Curiously (and amusingly), if the Registrar could swallow all his legal opinions, then no doubt a sufficient majority could be found in the House of Bishops to 'commend' what is not an alternative to the BCP. What the Registrar can do, we cannot foresee. But we hope the House of Bishops will test the rite on the Synod – yes, and amend its one controversial feature – if they do choose this route; and we hope they will only then 'commend' if they are getting overwhelming support.

There were also helpful planted questions about changes in copyright procedure, which we intend to publish next month.

This month's booklet . . .

is Pastoral no. 33, *Deacons at Your Service*, by Alison White and Di Williams.

. . . and next month's

is Joint Liturgical Study no. 4, *Models of Liturgical Theology*, by James Emperuer (48 pages, £2.50).

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THE KICK-OFF

The Kenneth Stevenson Column

How do we start the liturgy? I well remember the first time I attended the Byzantine Liturgy with any sort of critical eye. And after various preparatory rites, lasting quite a long time, the priest came out of the sanctuary carrying a large book high in the air, and then went back to the altar, taking care to place the book in the centre of it. To the friend standing next to me, I whispered, 'That's where the liturgy used to begin!'. A second memory comes to mind of attending the Eucharist for the first time when it was preceded by Morning Prayer. The assembled group included some clerics, and we went through a shortened form of Mattins, duly reciting the correct amount of psalmody, and sitting down to listen to two lengthy passages from Scripture, all in a very meditative style. At the end, one of our number retired to don necessary vestments, and the Eucharist followed in a very simple manner. Morning Prayer preceded the Eucharist, as a quasi-monastic act of preparation.

I *also* remember once attending a Sunday morning Eucharist in a parish church. There was the usual hustle and bustle and relentless frivolity, with an atmosphere of business, activity and some sleepy eyes all around me, and it was apparent that many families had endured the experience of a long lie-in, and a rather cross breakfast, with tempers frayed, and a rush to get to church on time. Somehow the rector blew the whistle on all this, and entered the pulpit at 10 o'clock on the dot, and we were treated to an endless series of notices, perhaps to keep us all in check, possibly to keep us all informed, and probably to boost his ego, because he was not preaching that morning!

Each of these memories serves to underline our common modern predicament to get ready to celebrate the Eucharist. For the Byzantines, the necessary preparation took the form of the old 'office of the three antiphons', which started to prefix the Eucharist immediately from about the eighth century onwards. The traditional western practice of reciting one of the monastic hours before the Eucharist is perhaps more familiar to some of us. But in pastoral terms, the hectoring notices and compere syndrome is most familiar.

Perhaps I should have added another method: and this is what I call the 'Chorus culture', in which the congregation assembles bit by bit, and there is about twenty minutes to half an hour of spontaneous or semi-organized singing of informal music in order to warm up the congregation. Of course, not everyone likes choruses! But the effect of such a preparation is to bind the congregation together before the liturgy proper starts. Doubtless it has a casualty rate among those who want to leave for another church, or else who prefer a quieter service at an earlier hour. But it is strange how liturgy develops its own infrastructure in order to make up for what is lacking. What might this be?

All over the country the Parish Communion Movement, which solved so many problems years ago, is producing its own. The sixty-minute performance can so easily sag, because inside those select minutes, we have to do just about everything that many of our forebears phased in various

ways. These included daily prayer, Bible study, Sunday evening worship, and probably a less frequent reception of Holy Communion. I am not going to argue the toss here as to whether or not this morning service should spread further, and actually include some 'breaks'. What I am concerned with is *how we start it*.

If history can teach us anything, it is that preparation is almost as important as doing. William Temple once said that if you are going to pray for ten minutes, you spend the first eight minutes getting ready to do it. In some places, this need for preparation is tackled head on with an almost separate opening liturgy, built around the Collect for Purity, and Silence, and Notices, and sometimes even Biddings for Prayer. There are even some church buildings where the congregation assembles in a large narthex, at which this preparatory liturgy is celebrated, prior to the processional entry of the whole gathering into the main part of the church, for the liturgy of the Word. Not all our buildings are flexible to this sort of demand. But many modern western liturgies start badly, and move from one part to another in an angular manner. Such a 'rite of entry' might recognize this need to start more eloquently, and thereby cushion the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist more substantially, and help us worship more coherently. History is full of lessons, both good and bad, and we should try to learn from them.

DAY CONFERENCE FOR DIOCESAN LITURGICAL SECRETARIES

Report on Conference on 14 October 1987

For several years now the Liturgical Commission has offered a Day Conference to all Diocesan Liturgical Secretaries. The worthy aim of the Conference is to keep the dioceses informed through their representatives of the tasks the Commission has in hand and also to provide a forum for the sharing of concerns and local initiatives.

Under the Chairmanship of the Bishop of Winchester, the day began with a brief act of worship including, not surprisingly, the Lord's Prayer in its ASB form! There followed a report on the work of the Liturgical Commission. Trevor Lloyd indicated that much time had been spent on the Family worship issue, with the Lectionary and the Eucharistic prayer coming up for special scrutiny. Service outlines and illustrated service cards were to be made available, together with a descriptive directory.

Kenneth Stevenson outlined progress on the proposed 'Advent to Candlemas' material in preparation. It was clear that a variety of material was under consideration and certainly something more than numerous options for Christmas carol services! The aim was to recover the great Advent themes, to emphasize the importance of the Feasts of the Epiphany and Candlemas, and to strengthen the link between Christmas and Easter. It seems likely that the 'Advent to Candlemas' span might be stretched to include All Saints and All Souls (and possibly Remembrance Sunday?).

The inclusive language issue was also subject to the Commission's attention, with most of the ASB having been combed for unacceptable words and forms. The suggested revisions are mercifully painless, with

invisible mending preferred as a solution. The group at work on this project have yet to look at the lections and the psalter; the latter will, I suspect, present more than its share of difficulties! A report to the House of Bishops is due in the Spring of next year.

Ample time was given over to the consideration of questions from the dioceses. Concerns about music and hymnody loomed large as well as requests for the provision of Family Worship material and Eucharistic prayers for use with children.

For the afternoon session the Conference was treated to an informative presentation by the Rev. Fr. Edward Matthews, Secretary to the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Liturgical Commissions. Though Vatican 2 requested that each diocese should have its own Liturgical Commission, in practice only 15 out of 22 dioceses in England and Wales had Commissions which functioned. (Lest the Anglicans feel flattered by having representatives in all the dioceses, I did discover that several one-man committees were in operation!) The R.C. Commissions aimed to work through three sub-committees dealing with a) Pastoral Liturgy, b) Music, and c) Art and architecture, to act as a centre for advice and communicate with the parishes with the hope of raising an awareness of liturgy and bringing about a higher standard of celebration by the people of God. The priest is not forgotten either and I rather warmed to the provision by the Commission of a video aimed at the improvement of presiding skills, entitled 'Not the nine o'clock Mass'! In conclusion, Fr. Matthews looked forward to the establishing of Diocesan Liturgical Centres, perhaps located in a parish, which could provide a leader with vision and a love of liturgy, to operate as a centre of excellence. With the reputation of the St. Thomas More Centre for Pastoral Liturgy well established and providing a valuable model, the future for liturgical awareness and formation in the R.C. dioceses looks healthy.

The Conference was informed that, in 1988, two Consultations were planned, with the attendance of Liturgical Committee Secretaries requested. The first would concentrate on Family Worship, the second on the 'Advent to Candlemas' proposals.

The day concluded with an act of worship in the chapel of Mary Sumner House, an experimental office with the use of material from the Canadian Book of Alternative Services, the Lutheran Worship Book, and some inspiration from the Maronite Office of Ramso. That the organ failed just before we sang Timothy Dudley-Smith's paraphrase of the Magnificat was a reminder that in worship the unexpected can occur! Nevertheless, *Woodlands*, pitched several semitones lower than its original key, was sung with great gusto, as might be expected in a gathering of those who love liturgy and glorify God within it.

Michael Gerland

COB'S LITURGICAL SCRAPBOOK

October: (16) in my diocesan's chapel for early eucharist – I remind him it is Feast of SS. Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer (overlooked in ASB), and he duly commemorates them (thus preparing for his trip to

Rome re *their* 'English Martyrs'); at lunch-time we launch a Poly chaplain in the context of a secular buffet lunch – it is curious compromise between an academic after-dinner speech occasion and genuine Christian worship – the result is no-one is sure what is required and the 'audience' is dumb, so I stop the proceedings as the chairman closes it all, and suggest a round of applause for the ecumenical chaplains; in the evening it is Roger Jones' new Christian musical 'While Shepherds Watched' – look out for it on tour round your way; (18) flourishing parish communion in a school in daughter Church of Dorridge – chorus to *Eastenders* tune . . . in the evening an ecumenical healing service (St. Luke's Day) for a Council of Churches – a few coming forward for ministry with laying on of hands; (19-20) conference for new Rural Deans with one Bible exposition and one presidency of the eucharist for my liturgical input – and then I depart fast on the second evening to get to our North East frontier to license a priest-in-charge of two of our (few) villages – nicely marked by the 'Greetings' in the rite being done not by people coming up the aisle to speak, but by around 20 rising in quick succession in the seats, and saying which of the village organizations they represent (including seven-year-olds) – enquiry afterwards suggests that three persons not on the list had joined the act . . . ; (25) St. Benedict's Bordesley in the morning, a shrine of erstwhile glories – in the afternoon the centenary of the re-building after fire of St. Cuthbert, Shustoke – the contemporary accounts of the fire tell of a schoolmaster toiling to remove frontals etc. from the church during the fire, rather like Ronald Jasper when York Minster went up (but in Shustoke's case there is no mention of what the clergyman was doing) – in the evening a 'first', baptism and confirmation at the Anglican Chaplaincy of the University, 35 people packed into a kind of catacomb.

November: (1) All Saints Day, and confirmation at Hazelwell, with uniformed parades – and a mitre-shaped greetings card for me from the Sunday School. Then off to Oxford, preaching at Corpus Christi College, and confirming two undergraduates, by connivance of the Bishop of Oxford; (2-3) at Launde Abbey for 24 hours to write and plan Grove Booklets – worship led in part by Ginny Wade, erstwhile Commission member – then (3-4) to residential diocesan staff conference, at which I preside once at communion; (8) Remembrance Sunday, and I have fixed to be preaching at Holy Trinity Cambridge (? in Simeon's pulpit), partly because I welcome the chance to be on the undergraduate round, partly because no-one in Birmingham wants to combine confirmation with remembrance – the rite begins at 10.30, and the silence is introduced by choruses, carefully chosen, and the semon (on Romans 6) comes immediately after it – Whew; (12) baptism and confirmation at St. Bernard, Hamstead; (13) emergency call for confirmation in nursing home of dying woman of 38 newly come to sure faith, fixed for Sunday, and then further call says 'come now', so I confirm her in the early evening – with grieving husband beside her, she herself lucid and responding. and receiving confirmation, anointing, and first communion (I revisit her, still alive, on Sunday, but she dies on Monday); (15) woe is me – wrong time fixed in my mind, and I am ten minutes late for confirmation in morning – they are very forgiving; in the evening five candidates from two parishes at (joyful) Bristol Street – one of them having first attended when I confirmed her sister in June, and now thoroughly converted . . .