

has a statutory role in monitoring experiments in worship in parishes, and recommending to the Bishop an appropriate response in each case.

A theme that constantly recurs in our work is that liturgy is primarily something *done* before it is something *said*. On the whole, most of our work is about enabling this 'doing' to be as vivid and life-connected as possible. Providing liturgical texts is important, but not, for us at any rate, the most important thing. The true text of liturgy lives in its acts, its presentation. That is the message we are hoping is getting across.

Michael Sadgrove—Diocesan Liturgical Advisor, Coventry Cathedral

DIOCESAN REPORT 13—SALISBURY

Since our re-formation in 1987, we have tried to balance our reactive role of responding to the continual requests from the diocese for liturgical material with a more proactive role. In particular we have organized several (fairly successful) training sessions for clergy and others in the conduct and presentation of worship. This is an area where we are convinced there is a need for a great deal of input and expertise, but we are still working to find the right formula.

However one of our major tasks this past year has been the production of an Order of Service for Extended Communion. As a rural Diocese with many multiple-Church benefices, the Bishop has been convinced that an experiment in this area is necessary. At present only a limited number of benefices are authorized to take part in the experiment, the Minister conducting the 'Extended' Service must be a Deacon or Reader, and there must be a clear temporal link between the two Services. To prevent any confusion we have produced service booklets for Rite 'A', Rite 'B' and BCP with clear guidelines and rubrics. In the Rite 'A' Order, the Service follows the usual lines until after the Confession and Absolution (in its later position); this is followed by an 'act of thanksgiving' based on the General Thanksgiving with Propers for festivals and fasts. The Minister then repeats the words of Institution followed by a declaration that 'our brothers and sisters at . . . , with whom in this benefice/group/team we share a common life, have taken bread and wine and, priest and people together, have given thanks over them according to our Lord's command.' This is followed by a prayer of Humble Access and the Peace and the Distribution. A similar pattern is followed in the other two Rites.

Members of the D.L.A.C. have been invited to help with the introduction of these services in each benefice. In due course we hope to share in the planned review of the experiment.

Barney Hopkinson—Chairman

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News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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October 1991

Editorial

The voting results are coming in week by week from the diocesan synods in England on the legislation to permit the ordination of women to the presbyterate. Any helpful advice this column can offer is therefore already too late for over half the dioceses. However, I venture again to suggest that voting in diocesan synods ought to be conducted on the basis of *personal conviction* alone. There are disquieting signs of people ignoring their own convictions and voting on the basis of their fears of a particular outcome. The result of this could be thoroughly to confuse the evidence: if, say, in a deanery synod 20% were opposed to the ordination of women, but another 15% voted against *because they had been persuaded that they would thus avoid a split in the Church of England*, then a diocesan synod might be looking at deanery figures split 65-35 in favour. If this in turn leads others to judge that the issue is too divisive, then the diocesan synod can divide on a 55-45 vote in favour. If the General Synod in turn looks at the 55-45 vote in particular diocesan synods, and tries to take it seriously, then at that point of decision the General Synod people may be making up their minds on the basis of quite spurious evidence. For underneath the diocesan figure is concealed an 80-20 split in favour of the principle, a figure which has never been seen in the open at all. The alternative, of course, is that General Synod should not take diocesan voting too seriously—and, if that proves to be the case, then it must be those who urged people to vote on the basis of fears not convictions who bear the responsibility. It would of course be absurd to write off all 'no' votes as 'soft' and to rally to all 'yes' votes as 'hard'—but those who play on fears and seek to change votes in diocesan synods on that basis must carry much of the responsibility if General Synod does so discriminate.

The final vote will not now come in February or July it seems. There will almost certainly be a 'separate reference' to the Convocations and to the House of Laity, and that will bring the final legislative decision to November.

I idly wonder whether anyone has yet attached this timetable to the necessity of a British General Election: some time between January and June. How does that bear upon the matter? The ordination of women is surely not an election issue? No, but the election almost certainly means delay—previous experience demonstrates that the last procedural appointment made on the nomination of a new administration is the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament, without which Church 'Measures' cannot find their way into the Lords and Commons. So that appointment might take a year from July 1992, and only after that would the Committee be considering the two Measures (one on the principle and its operation, the other on compensation for those quitting their posts from conscientious conviction). But—horror of horrors—suppose our 'first past the post' illiberal parliamentary voting system does the dirty on us and yields us a 'hung' parliament (which is contrary to most of the prospectuses issued on its behalf, but actually quite likely). Then of course

we might get yet *another* election within the twelve months following the 1992 election, and the appointment of that blessed Ecclesiastical Committee would then go back to square one.

Did someone say that the establishment of the Church of England is largely ceremonial and ornamental? Just tell *that* to some hundreds of women deacons if the legislation goes through Synod, but fails to get onto the parliamentary agenda. Or would bishops act without waiting for Parliament? It takes some believing.

The Bishop of Chester has duly come up with a long screed, published within, setting out his reasons for not only accepting an 'early age' (still blessedly undefined) for confirmation, but for adding the desired 'commitment' rite later. Very little of the letter seems to refute the scenario set out in my article in the August NOL, and I would cheerfully try to show that the bishop is, for the very best of all possible motives, creating the mixed practice he wishes to disavow—and it is clear in any case that such an altered practice is not going to carry the Church of England with the kind of consensus it needs to assume.

The truth is that the Church of England already recognizes dual practices. The Code of Practice for LEPs assumes that in many of them young children will receive communion prior to confirmation, *and will remain communicant elsewhere if their parents move house*. The existence of 'experiments' (I prefer 'projects') in many dioceses means that *de facto* dual practices exist alongside each other—and Synod threw out the proposal to phase them out. American and Canadian children come to this country with their parents—and receive communion. And even where confirmation is viewed as the necessary threshold to cross to be admitted to communion, in neighbouring parishes the minimum age may already differ by up to five years and create vast anomalies. So let us deal with the realities, not a mythical common practice which can only be changed if the whole 10,000 parishes agree to change overnight between one Sunday and the next, and otherwise even one parish which declines can hold the others up. Let change come (where theology undergirds it), and let not the fear of dual practice deter any of us. We have already got it—so we might as well go for the best use of it.

Colin Buchanan

GROVE BOOKLETS' TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY

The first numbered Grove Booklet was Ministry and Worship No. 1, *The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist*, by Julian Charley, and it was published on 31 December 1971. There is a plan to hold a twentieth birthday party at St. John's College, Nottingham on **Saturday 18 January 1992**. The plan is to have lectures before and after lunch, some kind of party character to the lunch, and worship to conclude the day, probably at around 3.30 p.m. The details are being fine-tuned as we go to press.

Authors and authors' group members and Grove Books Association members will receive personal invitations, but all others will be welcome. Note the date now, and an invitation with tear-off reply will come with next month's NOL.

This month's Booklet . . .

is Worship Series no. 119, *Shall We Dance?*, by Anne Barton—a basic introduction to dance in liturgy, a subject long awaited in the Grove series, and now provided.

. . . and next month's

is Spirituality Series no. 39, *Freedom to Choose*, by Richard Bauckham.

A NORTHERN CIRCULAR

We have received a copy of *Worship North*, a four-page production subtitled *A Newsletter for Members of Diocesan Worship Committees*. It reports suggestions for Northern co-operation from a Northern Coordinating Group, and we hope to report these next month.

DIOCESAN REPORT 12—COVENTRY

There is no Diocesan Liturgical Committee in Coventry Diocese. It was abolished in the diocesan *perestroika* four years ago. In its place was formed the Liturgical Group, with (now) a dozen or so members. As a group mercifully free of diocesan structures, we are informal, free-wheeling and *ad hoc*. Together, we try to fulfil three tasks: to inform the diocese about liturgical developments in and beyond the Church of England as a whole; to offer education and training in worship to lay people and clergy; and to provide liturgical resource material to the diocese and parishes. We see ourselves more as a clearing house than a factory. We enjoy working that way.

What do we do? Well, the usual things, of course, that give diocesan liturgists their *raison d'être*, like write and rewrite institution services, suggest where to turn for a service on Plough Monday, promote the offerings of the Liturgical Commission (a member of which is also a member of our DLG): *Patterns, Promises*, etc. We try to take a lead on issues we think are of importance to the church liturgically, the matter of inclusive language, for instance, or the liturgical role of women. We want to help the diocese adopt a *policy* on worship. We respond to parishes and deaneries wanting to mount a day or an evening on a liturgical theme. Recent topics have included *Promise* (twice), funeral liturgy and (of course) all-age worship.

More particularly, our thoughts are turning increasingly in the direction of helping parishes (and cathedrals) to do what they do as well, and as reflectively, as possible. We have been invited to a number of parishes to consult with the clergy and laity on the content and presentation of Sunday worship. Our major piece of work at present is in connection with the Decade of Evangelism. We believe that worship is the church's primary tool for mission, our 'shop window'. So we want to invite the diocese to begin this decade by spending a year or two simply reflecting on what it is we are offering (or not offering) in worship. To that end, we have prepared materials for a 'worship audit' for use by parishes wanting to undertake this exercise with the help of two or three members of the Liturgical Group. We shall be introducing these during the next few months at a presentation to the Diocesan Synod. All this is partly to follow up the liturgical survey we undertook five years ago in order to find out what exactly parishes were up to on Sundays and weekdays. The results of that exercise were reported in *NOL* at the time. Alongside this, the Group also now

cover.' In a context like this, it might very well be argued that self-prostration—indeed, mass self-prostration—was a somewhat ambiguous ceremony, the liturgical reasons for which might not be self-evident. The Archbishop himself commented that he has had some strange liturgical directions in his time, but this one takes the biscuit.

Anxious readers will be glad to know that the Archbishop of Canterbury duly survived the service, and returned to base, and is safely ensconced in Lambeth Palace again, and all is well with the world.

Correspondence

Dear Colin,

I read your article 'Returning from Peru' in the August issue of *News of Liturgy* with considerable interest. You waxed eloquent on the use of the 'poncho' as an ecclesiastical vestment. I would like to point out that the poncho was first used in Northern Argentina in 1964. When the first Mataco Indians were preparing for Ordination to the Diaconate, we had to think very carefully about what was relevant vesture. We therefore introduced the white poncho with a black stripe down each side for the deacons and priests. When I was consecrated Bishop in 1973, I wore a white poncho with a red stripe. Incidentally, I was wearing an open-neck shirt, which probably is a first! This was not to be provocative or capricious, but to enable future ordinations and the consecration of Mario Marino as Bishop to proceed without any sense of belonging to a second class or inferior order, because it had not been their custom to wear clerical collars—a ridiculous requirement when temperatures are up to 120 in the shade, you are living at a subsistence level, and clerical tailors are a thousand miles away.

The poncho has a number of advantages. It is a simple garment to make. All that is needed is a piece of white sheet and some red or black ribbon, both of which are obtainable in local stores. It is not costly to make. It is also a cool garment as it is possible for a current of air to pass through the sides. Furthermore, it folds neatly into a small oblong package which is light and easy to carry when travelling around villages.

Looking once again at the photograph of the 1988 Lambeth Conference, I cannot help but be struck by the uniformity of the Bishops in their garb. There are one or two minor variations but the western cultural domination in ecclesiastical wear prevails. I was saddened to learn that even last year a bishop consecrated in the Far East was required to wear a black rochet for his consecration, as this is the custom. It is a garment he quickly had to have made up with only 24 hours notice (the sort of thing that is possible in the Far East!) and he now has a garment that he will never ever wear again.

I am enclosing a not very good photocopy of the picture that hangs in my study, which was taken immediately after my consecration as Bishop in Northern Argentina.

Patrick B. Harris Bishop of Southwell

We regret that we cannot publish this particular photo. NOL has never published photos yet (I think), and had not picked the erstwhile Bishop of Northern Argentina sporting a liturgical red-striped poncho as the first such illustration. Only an overwhelming demand from our readership could alter our policy, I fear, but perhaps they will stock ponchos henceforth in Wippels—or Juliet Hemingray's.

GENERAL SYNOD NOVEMBER 1991

The General Synod meets from Tuesday 12 November to Thursday 14 November at Church House, in London. The main liturgical item on the agenda is the debate on the Liturgical Commission's report *The Worship of the Church as it Approaches the Third Millennium* (GS Misc 364). It is introduced by a Standing Committee covering report, *Liturgy: The Next Steps* (GS 989, Church House Bookshop, 8 pp. 50p). In this report the Standing Committee does little but echo the Commission's report, though it draws greater attention to the possibility of revising the synodical standing orders for revision procedures and also of revising the 'liturgical canons' (these, it should be noted are canons dealing with liturgy, not, as this shorthand title might suggest, canons which are printed in the form of a prayer). It rightly perceives that if the Commission is to prepare forms for amendment and authorization in the second half of the present decade, then any changes to the rules and procedures ought to come earlier.

The main point of such change in procedures would be to allow for a 'lighter' procedure for 'seasonal and resource' material, whilst retaining all the rigours of 'heavy' procedures for 'core' material. There is also hope of allowing earlier and more widespread experimental use prior to material coming to Synod for full authorization.

The Standing Committee does also want the views of the Synod about what kinds of Book or Books should usher in the Third Millennium—a major question raised by the Commission's own report.

The actual motions to be moved on the Thursday afternoon are as follows:

The Archdeacon of Leicester (the Ven. David Silk) to move:

'That this Synod ask the Standing Committee:

- (a) to bring forward proposals by July 1992 for the revision of Canons B2-6 so as to achieve the increased flexibility within an ordered framework called for by the House of Bishops;
- (b) in consultation with the Liturgical Commission and the Standing Orders Committee, to consider whether the authorisation of liturgical texts could be expedited by the revision of the liturgical business procedure and to report within the quinquennium to July 1995.'

and

'that this Synod:

- (a) recognize that some revision of the liturgical material contained in the Alternative Service Book should be put in hand so as to be authorised by 31 December 2000, although not hereby precluding the possibility of the existing texts in the Alternative Service Book also continuing to be authorised beyond that date
- (b) call on the Liturgical Commission to bring forward, within this quinquennium, recommendations as to how any revised texts and services might best be embodied in a book or series of books.

It is at least arguable that this last part is in breach of the standing orders itself—only the House of Bishops can give instructions to the Liturgical Commission!

In addition to the above there is also a Coventry Diocesan Synod motion of some moment. Mrs. Molly Dow (who is herself a member of the Liturgical Commission) will move at 2.30 p.m. on the first day of the Synod, the Tuesday:

'That this Synod, welcoming the initiatives taken by other Churches, request the House of Bishops as soon as possible to introduce proposals for a Eucharistic Prayer suitable for use in the Church of England at Services with children present.'

There is quite some mileage to come over this motion. It relates to (but does not really solve) the following problems:

- (a) do we really like the actual 'initiatives taken by other Churches'?
- (b) do we wish to draft eucharistic liturgical material centrally designed for the benefit of non-communicants—i.e. unconfirmed children?
- (c) is the Liturgical Commission covertly telling us that the draft Rite C in *Patterns* goes nowhere near meeting this need anyway?

Perhaps some friendly amending might yet be appropriate.

EARLY CONFIRMATION AND LATER 'COMMITMENT'

A comment on the question of admission to communion before confirmation by, Michael Baughen, Bishop of Chester

There have been very lengthy discussions about this in the House of Bishops and, in our trying to hear one another, one thing became important from my angle and, I believe, from that of most of the bishops. That is, that we do not end up in chaos in the Church of England with a total dis-unity of practice so that in one parish one practice happens and in another another practice and if people move parishes there is immense difficulty.

If it is decided by the whole Church to admit children to Holy Communion who have a real participation in the church and an understanding of the Faith, then let the whole Church do it. If, however, only some wish to proceed down this line and most wish to stay with the tradition of baptism, confirmation and admission to communion then, I believe again, that the whole Church should stand together. There are some limits to multiplicity of practice within the Church and there must be a limit here in view of the consequences across the next years into teenage and adulthood.

In the discussions in the House of Bishops, and also in General Synod, I have strongly made the point if the way forward is to stay with the traditional order, and this is where the Bishops in a majority vote came to agreement, and if it means, as the Bishops have indicated, that it must allow a younger age of confirmation, then it does stress the need for a clear act of adult commitment to be available at a later age.

Equally, if it was decided by the Church to proceed to admitting people to Holy Communion only on the basis of baptism then, again, some form of clear adult commitment is needed. It seems certainly from our recent episcopal visitor from New Zealand that there where they have gone over to the earlier admission, confirmation is dying out. Thus, as much as it may be said that people will come to confirmation later, their experience is that this is not now going to be true and I believe that even more is lost in the way of helping people to a proper Christian life and Christian commitment than has been under the present policies.

Whatever we were to each other that we still are.
Call me by my old familiar name.
Speak to me in the easy way you always used to.
Put no difference into your tone
Bear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.
Laugh as we always laughed
At the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me,
Let it be spoken without an effort
just as it always was.'

Whilst we cannot deny that Emily has died, let us not forget she lived and in living she made a valuable contribution to the lives of everyone here.

'When people die they do not cease to be;
they only pass beyond human sight,
There is a unity which links us all as one,
and all the islands, one earth.
Does not love link us? our friends
though they be on the other side of earth?
So those we love may pass beyond the reach
of our hands, but not outside the heart.'

Until we meet again with those we have known and loved on this earth, we leave Emily eternally at rest with Frederick and with our love we say farewell. Knowing that you have left your mark in our hearts, we leave you now Emily at rest.

[Curiously, as the proofs of this came through my hands, I found myself interviewed on the BBC World Service about a secular post-natal 'rite'. The British Humanist Association have published *New Arrivals*, a glossy booklet of rites and ceremonies (cost £3) for a secular welcoming of a new child into a family. Some of the suggested orders include a commitment by the parents to upright parenting. I was asked whether I thought this was a threat to the Christian Churches and their previous near-monopoly of post-natal services, but I had to reply that for a dozen good reasons the booklet contained no threat at all—and, although it would undoubtedly in use be confined to the frankly anti-religious vocal few per cent, the rites, words and decor at no point deny Christian faith (they simply ignore it) and thus the book is no more threatening to the Church than is an occasional secular school assembly. COB]

AND . . . WHOSE FUNERAL?

We learn the Archbishop of Canterbury encountered unforeseen liturgical possibilities when attending the funeral of the ecumenical patriarch in Istanbul on 9 October. The service apparently lasted for nearly five hours, and it was conducted in an atmosphere of some political tension. The traditional fragility of Greek-Turkish relationships had been somewhat endangered by the murder of a Turkish diplomat in Athens only the day before. To the Archbishop's surprise, therefore, the Anglican Archdeacon leant across to him halfway through the service and said 'If there is any trouble, hit the ground'. The Archbishop enquired what trouble there might be, and was told, succinctly, 'If bullets start to fly around, dive for

Her husband Frederick predeceased her some years ago.

Emily came to visit her son here in October 1990 and for past six months has resided in Australia. By nature Emily was a very quiet unassuming lady. Often people who have a quiet disposition are very charitable—they take everything in, but say little.

She reminds me of the most popular and long lived tune—*Londonderry Air*,—which has been described as ‘one of the most beautiful folk songs in the world.’ It is so old that no-one knows when it was written or who composed it. It was handed down from generation to generation, not in printed form but the human voice, probably being, adapted and altered until it reached the near perfection of the tune we know and love now. The words ‘Danny Boy’ are often sung to this tune. It begins calmly and rather sadly, slowly and gradually works up higher and higher until it reaches a note of triumph, then subsides again and ends on a note of calm. It teaches us the more we know and understand, the more we feel of so many things, be it of music, a picture, a flower, a friend—especially Emily, we need time to stop and reflect.

Memories—so many flooding back on a day as this.

Memories—of laughter shared, or burdens borne for and with one another, of family times and all those precious memories that gather about those.

Memories—of a wife, companion, parent.

Memories—perhaps of a mother’s discipline, energy and example.

Memories—of a grandmother.

Memories—of an aunt, a devoted friend.

Memories I cannot touch, only you here have the memories of Emily.

Thank you Emily for the memories. Thank you for sharing a part of your life with us. We are glad we knew your face, heard your laughter and felt your touch. We will always remember you as having a link in the chain of our lives.

COMMITTAL SERVICE

Amidst the finality of these moments, let us not forget the impact of Emily’s life. As words of farewell there are none more appropriate than those words which say:

‘We never said goodbye
But it’s just as well
How could we say goodbye
To someone we loved so well.’

Whilst I cannot deny the grief which Emily’s death has brought to your lives, as we commit Emily’s body may we reflect the way Emily may wish you to remember her:

‘I have only slipped away into the next room
I am I and you are you.

I was prepared to go along with younger confirmation if, and only if, it majored even more firmly than the present Service does on accepting the Faith. One of the dilemmas of those of us confirming is that the other aspects of the Service, in particular the hymns, emphasize very often the commitment side of Christianity. Hymns like ‘O Jesus, I have promised’ etc. plus one or two of the prayers stress this commitment. However, when you look at the actual confirmation service itself it does major on the Faith and very little on commitment, particularly in the Promises. There is the question about turning to Christ, about repentance and renouncing evil, and then the three questions about Faith with the corporate response: ‘This is the Faith of the Church’. There are prayers, of course, for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit and this is precisely the theme of the prayer at the laying on of hands. Strangely enough, there is no confirming of the other aspect which we are used to in baptism and that is the signing of the forehead with the cross or the giving of the candle to be lights in the world. The baptism service clearly builds in the commitment idea, but it is extremely difficult for a youngster to take this on board. I believe it would actually ease confirmation as we know it today, particularly for younger people, if we were allowed, in a sense, to concentrate on the Faith and less on the commitment of life at that point.

This would then make it much more open for us to establish an adult act of commitment and this would be possible for those who had been admitted to communion without confirmation or with confirmation, whichever way we go. It would stress the point that as one comes into adulthood, or towards adulthood, there is a responsibility now to take on Christian living and, however sincere 12-year olds are, they cannot honestly do that until they are through the first few years of puberty.

For adults, of course, a confirmation service or admission service to communion would be accompanied by the act of commitment.

The relatively small number of committed members of the Church is one of its saddest marks. That there can be so many more receivers than doers weakens the Church desperately. The Epistle to the Romans knows the problem. Here there is clear teaching about the cross, the atonement, the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and then all this is followed with a very frank and blunt appeal to ‘present your bodies as a living sacrifice’. St. Peter similarly bids us ‘come to’ the living stone to be built into a spiritual house. There is, therefore, a responsibility upon us to commit our lives in a deliberate way. For many of us (I speak personally), the deliberate act of consecration of our lives was the biggest step forward in our Christian pilgrimage. So I believe we need to encourage the making of that commitment. I know that people say that this commitment can happen without any act of it and, of course, that is so, but I want to encourage *all* members of the Church to take seriously the commitment of their life to Jesus Christ as Lord and not just to receive the benefits of what he has done for us as our Saviour.

If we followed along this idea of an act of commitment as adults, or near adults, there would normally be a course of preparation and, in the case of any youngsters being admitted to communion or being confirmed at an early age, then there would be plenty of time to take this on board at some depth. The course would need to examine the implications of commitment in terms of career, life-style, moral issues, money, service to others,

community involvement, church involvement, Christianity in the workplace, etc. It might be, for younger people, that a theme could be taken for each year over some six or even more years and this could be a major help in crossing the bridge of teenage turbulence into adult Christianity. For adults being confirmed there would need to be a reasonable length, over possibly months or weeks rather than years, of course.

We are used to the renewal of baptismal vows and with this there should be a renewal of commitment, i.e. of the renewal of the cross on the forehead and the taking of the candle as lights in the world. The Methodists do this with their annual covenant service very effectively and, although I would want the possibility of this renewal, I do believe that the *first act of deliberate commitment would be distinct in form*. It would not be mandatory upon people; nor is it necessarily a requirement to join the Electoral Roll. It should, however, be episcopal, either in a Deanery or on an area basis, and perhaps should be more than just a service to give it strong emphasis. It could be a little like a wedding with a service and reception of a special kind—but all that is a detail. The point underneath it is that we want to make it one of the most memorable and significant events in the Christian life and to assist people in that act of consecration.

The move afoot to disregard confirmation as having, in any way, a role of completing baptism (the Toronto Consultation) is deeply disturbing. In one sense, of course, it is absolutely true that there is a completion about baptism but, on the other hand, we have always been open to the accusation of Baptists and others that we devalue baptism because a child cannot have faith. It has been possible to answer that from the heart by pointing to the concept of covenant reception followed by public profession of faith in confirmation. It has been not only possible to defend this but also positively to commend it, because it is a marvellous way of the child being recognized as within the family of Christ at baptism and not held back until later years. Yet, at same time, it still requires the need for a personal expression of faith. If there is a pressure to regard baptism as complete and confirmation to be unnecessary and admission to communion to be possible without confirmation, then there *must* be a clear acceptance and profession of the faith from the heart or, I believe, we will cause great damage to our credibility over infant baptism.

One criticism of 'Faith Confirmation' at an earlier age is of the disparity between youngsters and adults in the same service. I firmly believe that we devalue confirmation at present by this mix. When one has, for instance, a university professor, the managing director of a major company, and a surgeon being confirmed with 12-year-olds there is no way in which a bishop can do more than address the 12-year-olds. It is frustrating not to be able to relate properly to people of such senior professions and understanding. Separate adult services of Confirmation create a totally different atmosphere, Here one can address adults as adults and it is deeply appreciated.

As the debate continues, I believe we should always keep clear in our minds three factors:

- (a) the nature of the sacrament.
- (b) the need for personal profession of faith.
- (c) the need for committed adult membership of the Church.

If we lose any of these, we lose the keys to a vital Church in future generations.

CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

A conference on death certainly excites the media. The Churches' Group for Services at Cemeteries and Crematoria (no easy diminutives there), discovered the somewhat macabre interest of the press when they held a day's debate in Birmingham on 21 October on the role of the minister at a funeral. Its Chairman, the Rt. Rev. Michael Henshall of Warrington, found himself grilled by Angela Ripon, and more seriously interviewed on the *Sunday* radio Programme.

'The tabloids are inevitably chasing stories of funerals that go awry, Ministers who mix up the sex of the corpse, or commit "howlers" of one kind or another. The heaviest opt more for cultural influences albeit not themselves averse to the occasional horror story,' the Bishop explained.

The Conference itself, well attended by ecumenical representatives from around the country, looked with some care at the growing frequency of conflict between Clergy and Funeral Directors, at the problems posed when a Priest is called upon to officiate at ten funerals in a week, and more significantly perhaps, at the meaning of 'grief' and 'mourning' in a secular society.

The growth of life-centred funerals, particularly in Australia and the Netherlands, was noted, and some speakers anticipated such a growth in Britain in the decade ahead. Dr. Maura Naylor, from Leeds, and Canon Frank Wright of Granada Television were the chief speakers. The former concentrated her attention on all that happens, or should happen, or shouldn't happen at a crematorium. The latter went deeply into the pastoral and liturgical role of the Minister or Officiant.

Some speakers pleaded for a wider liturgical framework in which the complexities of grief and mourning could be better managed and supported. It was felt, for example, that the Forty Days period of mourning associated with the great Forty Days of Easter, in areas of the Orthodox Church, had considerable value. In a society often wanting to dismiss death as quickly as possible, liturgical 'markers' could be of support, especially to practising Christians. The funeral service itself was often experienced in a state of shock and inattention, and therefore other contacts with ultimate reality in the form of 'markers' might well be appropriate.

AND A SECULAR FUNERAL?

We guess that few readers have much experience of a wholly secular funeral rite. The following text has reached us from Australia. It must have been read wholly by one 'celebrant':

FUNERAL SERVICE IN LOVING MEMORY OF EMILY PERFECT

In what we do here today we celebrate the gift of life. None of us elected to be made alive; we were born without our consent. Nevertheless, it is not compulsion but the giftness of life that stands out in our relationship of the miracle and mystery of birth.

Emily was born 78 years ago in London, England.

In 1935 she married Frederick and they had two children.