

Season. We were thus able to work with some who had never *seen* copies of *Lent, Holy Week and Easter*, let alone *used* it, and they went away as excited by the discovery as we were alarmed that they hadn't made it already. The course also looked at musical, dramatic and architectural possibilities—evening sessions were open to lay people to join their clergy at a series of workshops, including Roles and Ministries, President and People. We used the regular worship throughout the course to introduce material from Patterns, Enriching the Christian Year and Celebrating Common Prayer; and one afternoon was spent visiting Portsmouth Cathedral, re-ordered and completed with the Paschal Liturgies very much in mind.

This and other experiences, as for example when visiting parishes, have underlined for us the fact that so many of our worshipping communities are still at liturgical square one, even waiting to pass 'go'; and while some of us are looking ahead to the revision of ASB and the supplements, many others have yet to get seriously to grips with the originals.

The task facing us, therefore, is to enable people to ask the most basic questions, 'What is the Church—who worships and why?', and it never ceases to surprise us (though perhaps it shouldn't surprise us), how many issues come down to these. For example, again under the Decade guise, I was asked to consult with a newly united benefice of four country churches struggling to agree on a Sunday worship timetable acceptable to the various congregations, (which each wanted *their* service provided at *their* time), yet sustainable by the leadership team of one priest and a lay-worker. It was only by asking the basic questions that the different interest-groups could come to some understanding both of their responsibility/belonging to the wider parish and of their potential role within their own congregations.

By contrast, on another occasion I was asked to preach on the relationship between Worship and the Decade at yet another country parish, which shall remain nameless. I spoke in fairly basic Pauline terms about the Body of Christ and the celebration/proclamation of our corporate faith and vision. After the service, I was accosted by an indignant parishioner: 'You obviously haven't been in this job very long, have you?' I admitted I had only been ordained for 16 years. 'Well, we don't want you young upstarts . . . (it was nice to be called young, if nothing else) . . . with your new-fangled ideas. So do us a favour, push off back to your own parish and don't come here again with all your trendy notions about the corporate body of Christ or whatever!' It was the first time I had heard St. Paul described as 'trendy'—but if that perception is anything like general, then we are perhaps in an even bigger mess than we thought, and really do need to concentrate on the most basic questions of liturgical theology and formation.

Charles Pugh

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News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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September 1993

Editorial

In the August NOL I published a letter from Michael Perham in which he complained (gently and politely, being Michael Perham) that I had misrepresented the nature of the Liturgical Commission in a review I had done in July of *Renewing Common Prayer*, the latest symposium begotten and born from the fecund minds of the Commission. Part of the problem was that I had identified as the peculiarly fecund group on the Commission four named persons—David Stancliffe, Kenneth Stevenson, Bryan Spinks and Michael Perham himself (who was the editor). The recent reprint of *Towards Liturgy 2000* (which I more or less review on page 10 below) confirms my impression. I went on to observe that the genuinely 'renewing' chapters in *Renewing Common Prayer* were in Part Two of the book, and were all contributed by the evangelical members of the Commission. Michael Perham denies that the Commission ever functions on such a basis—and I suppose I could meet him by saying that I really do not suspect the Commission of saying 'Let us put the scholar-moderate-catholics in Part One looking backwards and let us put the action-people-evangelicals in Part Two looking forwards'. Indeed I can well believe that the churchmanship distinction was not in their minds. However, my team of four mentioned above does come in Part One, and it is evangelicals who come in Part Two, and that is all I want to say. If it is impolitic to observe a range of candle-power (and annexed theologies) on the Commission, then I apologize for my tactless gaffe and will endeavour to steer clear in the future—but I cannot help the naughty thought that part of the basis of appointment to the Commission was to ensure a representative range of theological standpoints on it (certainly my own letter of appointment from Michael Ramsey 'way back said that), and I find it faintly odd if the Commission itself does not want us to notice it. (By contrast, everyone with normal brain-cells knows in what interest Baroness James is a member of the Commission, and expects there to be not only a 'range' but even a cleavage of opinion on *her* issues . . .)

I did not reply to Michael Perham last month not only because of cramped space and cramped time, but also because I had a more explicit review of *Renewing Common Prayer* being published in late August in the *Church of England Newspaper*, and I thought it might need to be taken into account also. In it I reflected further on the predilection with the past in a book which claimed to be fronting up to the future. I make the point here by a quotation from that review:

'Oh, for some straight frank, *theological* confrontation, for an apologia which would say "If you and you and you are to come to terms with being an incarnational church in the twenty-first century, with the mission to the people of your own time, then you had better forget worshipping in the language of Shakespeare, leave your

liturgical cultural ghetto, and become worshipping and evangelizing people of your own time." Such an approach would have led to considerable change of mood of Michael Perham's Introduction, and a re-distribution (to put it mildly) of the balance of Mark Dalby's "The Prayer Book Reformation Ideal". The centre-piece of Part One is a composite chapter from "Phyllis James" (i.e. P. D. James, or Baroness James), Michael Perham, and David Stancliffe on "Image, Memory and Text", and this chapter, whilst by definition it must include an element of conservatism, keeps on going off into sops to the Prayer Book Society such as "... generations are growing up that have no texts, new or old, in their memory to feed their souls. *Some will see in this a strong argument for a return to Prayer Book texts, and, even more, to the Authorized Version of the Bible ...*" (page 35, italics mine).

Now I confess that the reactionary/radical divide is not the same as the catholic/evangelical one, or certainly not *au fond*. But a Commission which has as its centrepiece task the provision of the main forms to be used in the Church of England in the third millennium does seem to this observer to be over-protective of that which it is by definition to replace (oh, sorry, *not* 'replace' but merely 'supplement'—and supplement with compelling good materials). It is almost as though the Commission had decided that its publications were either to be sold mainly to the Prayer Book Society, or, if not, were to inform Commission-watchers that the main controversy to take aboard is that between Tudor and contemporary English. I illustrate this by: firstly the stuff in the report *The Worship of the Church as it approaches the Third Millennium* (1991); secondly, the Commission's handling of the submission to it by the PBS (which I am reprinting here at intervals, though struggling in my editorial conscience about the prudence of doing so); thirdly the recent publication (edited by one Michael Perham) of *Model and Inspiration* (SPCK, 1993, £3.50, 48pp.), a slim booklet which reprints the four main papers (by Colin James, P. D. James, David Martin and David Stancliffe) at the colloquium held between the Commission and the Prayer Book Society in Autumn 1992. These three treatments would seem to be plenty, but to find the same issue also re-tried in the various supposedly forward-looking symposia to which I have referred does suggest the priorities of the Commission have been heavily reshuffled by the vocal persistence of the Prayer Book Society. I well recall David Martin editing a book which was subtitled *The Prayer Book Controversy*, but that of itself set up what I call the 'Postman and dog syndrome'. The point is this—the postman (postperson?) has come to deliver the mail, and *that* is top of his agenda. The dog on the other hand wants to see off the postman, and *that* is top of her agenda. If the postman can brush off or ignore the dog in passing, then he sustains his priorities—but if the dog, by seizing the postman's trousers, can induce a fight, then the dog asserts *her* priorities. What should have been wholly incidental to the postman's life—a barking dog—has forced herself onto the top of his agenda. I believe that in this case the dog has barked so loud that the postman has been struck by fear, and is nervously approaching the gate trying to think of ways of buying off or bribing the dog. I go back and ask 'What will the church need in the third millennium?'

DIOCESAN REPORT 7: WINCHESTER

Readers of our first report may recall that our 'Bishop's Liturgical Committee' had just been re-ordered as the Winchester Diocesan Worship Group. The membership was changed from a representative mix of churchmanship and geographical location to a body with specific skills and experiences to offer, including two or three general liturgists, a musician, dramatists, youth and children's workers, and a member of the D.A.C. The Group offers itself as a resource to parishes and deaneries, members working corporately or individually according to the type of help requested; and we operate as a sub-group of the Diocesan Decade of Evangelism Steering Committee.

Now this latter point may cause follicles to curl in Kenneth Stevenson's 'Decade-Free Zone'; but it has some distinct advantages (apart from the unlikely achievement of curling the good Doctor's follicles):

- (1) It gives us a budget—in 1993 over £1,000—used for a variety of purposes . . . printing and publicity, equipment for dance and drama teams, grants towards special liturgical celebrations (including the famous Winchester 'Rave in the Nave') and, for another occasion in the Cathedral, the provision of a large paddling pool from which the outgoing Chairman of the Liturgical Commission liberally soaked himself and hundreds of families in remembrance of their baptism . . . they are now unlikely to forget it . . . and, of course, payment of our subs to NOL.
- (2) It links the Worship Group firmly with other departments under the Decade umbrella, such as training and education, the Council for Mission and Ministry, giving us a definite place and voice in Diocesan strategy.
- (3) It gives us access to people, groups and parishes who would not normally consider attending or hosting a 'Liturgical' event, but are happy to do so under the guise of 'evangelism'.

This last point is perhaps pertinent to the wider issue of 'marketing' Liturgical Formation. All too often, Liturgical Study Days and Courses appear to be preaching to the converted few. How do we enable others to take the subject seriously?

There is, we suggest, a virtue in guile. For example, all stipendiary clergy in the Diocese under the age of 60 are required to attend at least one In-Service Training Course per annum. This year, the Training Team decided to base its choice of courses on the work of the various Decade Sub-Groups; and we took the opportunity to offer a three-day residential course on 'Worship as Evangelism'. It may just be argued that this title was misleading, in that it attracted some whose expectations were rather less to do with liturgical formation than packing bottoms on pews and keeping them entertained—certainly not a group who would contemplate attending something like a Praxis Day. But, introducing the theological model of liturgy as proclamation, (hence justifying the course title), and using the fact that the course was held early in Lent to look ahead to Holy Week and Easter, we explore some of the resources for the Paschal

and interpretation of Holy Orders, but also for none at all. The overriding impression left upon me is that, though there may be some local unions of churches (such as that of the United Reformed Church), pluralism over ministry is so marked and so wide that it is not possible to see all the church viewpoints reconciled, nor is it even desirable to do this. If this means organic unity is humanly speaking impossible, so be it. I was struck however by the fact that all the contributors themselves exercise leadership in the church, so that no voice is really lay. I suspect we would have had quite a different symposium if genuinely lay people had written it.

Hugh Montefiore

Michael Perham (ed.) *Towards Liturgy 2000: Preparing for the Revision of the Alternative Service Book* (SPCK/Alcuin, 102pp., £7.99)

If you think there is something familiar about the title, you are in the same thought-world that I inhabit. It is advertised as a new edition of a book which originally appeared in 1989—but in fact it is a straight reprint. I reviewed it at its first appearance saying that it was actually very cautious and a lapse of four years has not altered that. It may well be still in demand in its original form (even with a 60% increase in price), in which case we must wish it well. But a mere reprint does not grapple with a fast-moving situation.

COB

This month's booklet ...

... is Alcuin/GROW Joint Liturgical Study no. 25, *The Sacramentary of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Text for Students, with Introduction, Commentary and Notes*, edited by Ric Lennard-Barrett of West Australia. This adds yet another patristic liturgical text to our wide range.

... and next month's

is Worship Series no. 126, *All-Age Worship*, by Anne Barton (who previously wrote no. 119, *Shall We Dance?*). This is a very timely production, and meets a rising need being expressed all round the country.

... and a reprint

is Worship Series no. 115. *Readers and Worship in the Church of England*, by Carolyn Headley. We are also reprinting Evangelism Series no. 19, *Reaching the Unchurched: Some Lessons from Willow Creek*, Paul Simmonds—a booklet which, although it is in the Evangelism Series, wrestles with the role of worship in evangelism, and with evangelistic (or soft-touch?) elements in worship.

In the process I have lost touch with part of my thrust. I fully accept that the four persons who planned *Renewing Common Prayer* were not the team of four I identified as central to the life of the Commission. But I do now ask whether they had not been frightened by a bark.

Colin Buchanan

DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMITTEES

The annual day conference of the diocesan liturgical committee happens in London on 13 October. The Commission is due to share some of its thinking with the dioceses, particularly in respect of the lectionary and of initiation. At the end of September, only half the dioceses had booked in for the day, and that looks slightly worrying. A report will come next month.

... AND ANOTHER LITURGIST BECOMES A BISHOP

We pay glad tribute to David Silk, Archdeacon of Leicester who has been headhunted by the diocese of Ballarat in the Province of Victoria in Australia. It seems likely that he has been desired for his opposition to the ordination of women as presbyters, but there are enough such clergy for it to be clear that he was chosen for much else also. He will bring considerable English experience and learning to the Australian liturgical scene. I quote a little of what I wrote recently for the Australian Church press:

... I worked on the Church of England Liturgical Commission with him from 1972 to 1986, and conceived there a great respect for him. He and I became the catholic/evangelical axis which all proposals had to clear if they were to be unanimously recommended to the Synod ... He was a tough customer for a person like me to meet; he had learned his trade at St. Stephen's House ("Staggers") in Oxford in the latter and most autocratic days of Arthur Couratin—and he had learned it well. He knew his doctrine, knew what was negotiable and what not, and was also a master practitioner of the liturgical material which reflected his doctrine. So we truly levelled with each other, truly grappled with understanding the other (and the oddities which made the other tick), truly helped each other find ways of convincing the various glowering conservatisms and making them budge constructively—and thus together had a large hand in putting virtually the whole of the ASB through the General Synod without doctrinal opposition.

Go well in Oz, David.

COB

INFANT BAPTISM AND THE GOSPEL

Infant Baptism and the Gospel: The Church of England's Dilemma is a new book by COB, published by DLT (208 pages, £9.95) and reviewed elsewhere in this NOL. COB still offers postfree copies to any who will send a cheque for £9.95 to the editorial address shown on page 12 of NOL.

A sticky addressed label would make assurance doubly sure. (COB also has postfree copies of *Growing in Newness of Life*, reviewed in last month's NOL, available postfree for £7.50—again with addressed label for preference.)

THE COMMISSION AND THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY

We continue the printing of the text we began earlier in the year.

THE PBS SUBMISSION

7. We would urge the Liturgical Commission to produce a revised ASB (to stand alongside the BCP) rather than a range of new service books. We would also urge the Commission to give the BCP tradition a significant role in any new Service Book.

To that end we suggest it should include some extant traditional texts that are conservative revisions of BCP services; for example the Series One Eucharist, and the 1928 marriage, baptism and funeral services though those of us with evangelical views would treat the last-named with caution for reasons which will be well understood. The important point is for the new book to contain services reflecting a traditional Anglican viewpoint. We would welcome Series 1 or texts similar to Series 1 being included in the new book.

THE COMMISSION'S RESPONSE

7. What form the replacement to ASB takes is of course still a matter of debate. Members of the commission would support the inclusion of 'Series 1' style of material in any replacement, perhaps along the lines of *The Sunday Service Book*.

But we are not all convinced that common prayer will be best protected by having only one book. One book will either be so small that a large amount of material will remain outside, and people will then be likely to turn to unauthorized material (some of it not of the best) to supplement their liturgical diet, or it will be so large that it will be unusable and certainly unlikely to be something treasured by individuals, owning their own copy, drawing it into their private prayers, and bringing it to Church, in the way that often happened with the Prayer Book. Although the debate needs to continue, we should urge upon the Prayer Book Society the possibility that a several volume replacement to ASB might in fact preserve common prayer more effectively than one volume supplemented by private enterprise.

CORRECTIONS RE THAT IRISH BOOK

Our mention of the book *Alternative Occasional Offices* of the Church of Ireland in August has provoked a deserved rebuke from Bryan Mayne, who was one of those who originally supplied us with a copy. The review copy got improperly detached from his very helpful covering letter, and so we were revealed as ignorant and even complaining in respect of information which he had kindly supplied. So now we record (as an almost *verbatim* quotation from his letter):

The Church of Ireland Book of *Alternative Occasional Offices* 1993, paperback £1.95, hardback £4.95 (plus 20% postage) is obtainable from APCK Book Centre, Belfast Cathedral, Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2HB (phone 0232-244825). Belfast is in the UK, so sending sterling is OK.

To complete the abject apology, we withdraw any cheap and unreflective jokes about the Irish.

COB

Book Reviews

Colin Buchanan, *Infant Baptism and the Gospel: The Church of England's Dilemma* (DLT, 1993, 208pp. £9.95)

This book is one of which many have been waiting for; a substantial volume by a someone who has spoken and written about baptism over many years. This book draws together the incisive analysis of the beliefs and practices within the Church of England that we have come to expect from the author.

The book re-examines the case for infant baptism, in the opening chapter. Colin Buchanan reminds us that we are faced with silence on a definitive scriptural warrant *vis à vis* adult/infant baptism. He does however make some logical deductions. This sets the tone for the rest of the book: that the church must set its practice in the context of biblical standards such that the division of adult-child is not the key issue. He all too painfully reminds that poor rationale and practice has been the most powerful tool in the hands of those who argue against baptizing infants. However, the poverty of biblical and even logical thinking in those proponents of 'indiscriminate' baptism is exposed in Ch. 4.

The case is made for a realistic assessment of the context in which the pastoral practice must be worked out, and in Ch. 5 we are given some examples of this. However I am not sure that the book gives sufficient space to the analysis of the social context. We may accept the effective paganization of culture, indeed its 'practical atheism', but surveys and experience also point to a large majority who still believe in God; and recently, who want Christian worship and education in schools (*The Independent* 6/9/93). The mission of the church is in a far from mono-chrome cultural context, and the book may have benefited from a more detailed critique.

The book reviews trends in thinking, pastoral practice, liturgical development and synodical debate. One is often left to wonder at the unwillingness of many to tackle issues that scripture speaks plainly on. The final chapter challenges the church to face up honestly to the pretence of 'Christian England', to properly inform enquirers, teach the gospel and retain the integrity and propriety of baptism.

Anthony Oehring

ed. P. Beasley-Murray, *Anyone for Ordination?* (Marc, 1993., xv/174pp, £8.99)

Theological disputations about ordination so often tend towards upholding or demolishing the catholic position. It is therefore somewhat of a novelty to read this symposium the majority of whose contributors are on the evangelical wing of the Church Universal. These comprise a Baptist, Methodist, the founder of the Ichthus Christian Fellowship, a Mennonite, a member of the United Reformed Church and an Independent, as well as an Anglican (Colin Buchanan) and Roman Catholic—and of course a 'statutory woman'. (Why no Orthodox contributor?) As in all symposia, the contributions are very different in style, some more valuable than others. What is stimulating is to see the case argued not only for a particular form

ELLC IN GENEVA

The consultation concerned with the co-ordination of liturgical texts throughout the English-speaking world met this summer in a place where you normally choose between French and German! But, of course, Geneva also contains the headquarters of the World Council of Churches and it was to that building that the members made tracks.

We were particularly interested in making our mark with the Faith and Order Commission. Despite having only just returned from their assembly in Santiago de Compostela, they found time to listen to us and Dr. Gunther Gassmann attended our initial presentation. We also had conversations with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. The object of these discussions was to make them aware of the work of ELLC, both the revised Common Texts (contained in *Praying Together*) and our advocacy of *The Revised Common Lectionary*.

I don't think it would be unfair to suggest that the principles of ecumenical liturgical cooperation that ELLC represents had not previously figured high on the Faith and Order agenda. The World Alliance and the Lutherans had already some experience of such cooperation, particularly in North America. However, we received encouragement from Dr. Gassmann and his staff which we hope will be translated into further action in the future.

In the meanwhile, during its normal meeting, the Consultation heard with pleasure of the wide 'take-up' of *The Revised Common Lectionary* in many parts of the English-speaking countries. There was also news of the very positive resolution passed at the Joint Meeting of the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council in Cape Town earlier this year, which commended *RCL*. (See *NOL*, no. 218, p.8) ELLC has been asked by the (North American) Consultation on Common Texts (CCT) to undertake the sponsorship of *RCL* and one of the purposes of the meeting in Geneva was to further this, not least with the ecumenical bodies located there.

As far as the Common Texts were concerned, again they seemed to be finding acceptance. The representatives of the Roman Catholic ICEL confirmed that the text would be incorporated into their proposals for the revision of the Sacramentary volume of *The Roman Missal*.

The Consultation spent some time on their continuing work on an 'Ecumenical Eucharistic Prayer'. Progress on this is slow, and there are some of our member associations (that is, the various ecumenical-liturgical committees across the world) who are not altogether convinced that this is an achievable project.

However, there is little doubt that ELLC itself is serving a useful purpose in providing the means by which there can be a commonality of worship, even while divisions sadly still exist.

Donald Gray

RITUAL AND THE LANGUAGE OF PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

The more we learn about the way we organize our relationships with one another, both individually and in groups, the better we understand the part played in life by what we so foolishly dismiss as 'play-acting'. Erving Goffman has this to say about the theatricality of ordinary human behaviour: 'The individual is involved in real, literal-minded projects of action and is an object of such action also. On the other hand, it is known, although perhaps not sufficiently appreciated, that the individual spends a considerable amount of time bathing his wounds in fantasy, imagining the worst things that might befall him, day dreaming about matters sexual, monetary and so forth. He also rehearses what he will say when the time comes, and privately formulates what he should have said after it has come and gone . . . Instead of stating a view outright, the individual tends to attribute it to a character who happens to be himself, but one he has been careful to withdraw from in one regard or another'.¹ These practices, and others like them, are characteristic of being human. *We dramatize ourselves in order to increase the communicative force of what we say and do*. Just as we cannot help thinking and feeling and drawing conclusions, so we are inevitably bound up in self-dramatization as part of our inalienable self-consciousness. It is the way we present ourselves to one another and to ourselves.

This 'natural' drama is amoral, and serves both truth and falsehood. It always involves a certain arrangement of the evidence if it is to conform to our intention. This is not necessarily undertaken in a spirit of deception, although of course it can be. We act in such ways in order to let our real meaning stand out in the maze of possible meanings which would more or less fit the circumstances. In other words, we heighten our meaning to get it across. This is not exaggeration or distortion, but simply ordinary human self-expression. It involves how we stand or sit, where we direct our gaze, which words we stress, how long we pause, our tone of voice and general expression, and many, many other things. We do all this quite naturally, most of the time without any intention to deceive or manipulate. Indeed, it would be hard to communicate with other people without this kind of 'dramatic selectivity'. We would be less than human without it. We live in an interpersonal world which is perpetually adjusted to keep abreast of our own and other people's intentions, negotiating every understanding in the light of a scenario that is itself arrived at by the use of shared imagination.

Ritual is the drama of interpersonal relationships presented as an expression of human meaning, for its own sake and as an offering to a greater meaning, a more personal truth. Using drama to communicate with God sanctifies it as an expression of truth; because it is the way that people relate to one another, its own truthfulness makes it appropriate as a way of addressing the Source of relationship. This is not to suggest that such a way of looking at things, people and God is free from problems. It is because of the relationship of persons which allows us to present ourselves dramatically to God *as ourselves* that we find ourselves involved in certain major difficulties which render the relationship impossible to

¹ Goffman, E., *Frame Analysis* (Northeastern University Press, 1974) p.551.

sustain—on our part, that is. Faced with the difference between ourselves and God which relationships alone can bring home to us, we are turned in upon ourselves, forced to contemplate our humanity in an unfavourable light. Searching for God, we become aware of our own confusion; glimpsing him increases our own darkness. From every point of view contrast makes the experience more intense. Morally, epistemologically, ritual represents an impossible enterprise and an irresistible vocation. We cannot and must dramatically present the truth; we cannot and must respond to the divine invitation, reaching across to others and to God.¹

This, however, is where the rite's honesty comes to our aid. Even at its best, human handiwork stands out crudely in any attempt to portray a community's experience of divinity. It is from this position, one in which there is a minimum of confusion between the partners in the divine-human relationship, that the rite's movement begins. Just as the theatricality of a dramatic presentation draws attention to what is really happening on stage, reminding us that it is *staged*, set apart in place, time, and action from the rest of life, so religious ritual proclaims its own identity as an artifact in order to bring home the impossibility of the reality it celebrates. Both rite and play lay claim to a special dramatic world, contrived to represent the circumstances in which invention attains the status of the personal. In this artificial world distance has the effect of bringing into an ideal unity realities ordinarily kept apart, a phenomenon demonstrated in the theatre by the 'aesthetic distance' that separates actors from audience. Because the worlds of 'theatron' and 'skene', spectator and plot, reality and imagination, are so dramatically separate, the movement for personal contact between them is intensified to the point where it becomes the dominant existential reality, and the total event is transformed into the experience of relationship, the shared territory of the imagination.

In the words of Martin Buber, theatre and ritual produce a 'polar unity' by means of 'the stern over againstness of I and Thou'.² It is not only the shape of the theatre that has this effect, however. Nor is it only the carefully mounted performance, which by the exercise of skill on the part of so many people manages to arouse the imagination of the audience. At least, it is not the effect of the wide range of skills involved. What is crucial to both drama and ritual is something that pre-dates both of them. Ritual and theatre are powerful mechanisms for directing attention away from themselves. They work paradoxically, in the sense that the greater 'realism' they achieve, the more danger there is that their true message is overlaid by the familiar characteristics of the spectator's own reality. The timeless significance of human experience (if we may use such a term) is not nearly so apparent to us in ordinary daily living as it is in church or in the theatre. In these places the familiar directs our attention to what is beyond, to what things *mean*—and to what life requires of us. Both are situations for believers. We see the result of human attempts to reproduce truthfulness, to make a fitting place for a meeting with God, to study the

¹ Grainger, R., *The Ritual Image* (Avon, E. Molesey, 1993).

² Buber, M., 'Drama and theatre' and 'The space problem of the stage' in *Pointing The Way* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957).

reality of men and women by acting out a story about them, and we are forced to look beyond. Both depend on the suspension of disbelief in order to teach us how to let belief teach us how to live more completely.

The practical arrangements we make for presenting drama and ritual give shape to encounters that profoundly disturb our equanimity; at the same time, as we have seen, they focus our awareness on things that concern us, encouraging us to take them personally. We need to take such things seriously; we also need to be protected from their unmediated presence.

Just as we must withdraw temporarily from events in order to register them as real happenings and incorporate them within our continuing experience, so the structure of ritual and drama defends us from the shattering impact of things that we have no way of coping with, which, sooner or later, have somehow to be taken account of by us—special happenings that are compulsory and intolerable. Ritual consists of defeat that is victory, agony that is healing, nonsense which alone is real sense. The paradoxes in the story act as symbols: they direct us to glory by filtering its reality to us in a form in which we can receive it. There is no contradiction here. Things are also as they seem. The glory *is* the pain, the pain *is* the glory. Defeat and victory are total and identical. Within the rite's span, Eternity is revealed.

Ritual, then, is a matter of danger and safety, using the word 'danger' to stand for a holiness so intense that we are thrown intellectually off-balance by it. It is a way of preserving our awareness of that holiness—which means resisting the temptation to argue it into some kind of manageability. Thus ritual serves as a counter to theology, the other half of the picture of our public account of God. On one hand we are out-faced by the transcendent power of Otherness; on the other we fall prey to the homologizing tendency of the self; both are ways of reducing God and inflating ourselves. Both avoid the issue and are self-defeating. It is the God that we cannot capture who summons us to himself. If we underestimate the danger of this encounter, aligning our understanding with God's Being, we miss the point. We have come to be changed, re-made by divinity. Anyone who can do this—re-make a person, totally changing their essence while managing to preserve, or even endorse, their individual personhood—must be, by any human reckoning, awesome and even terrible. Not as an idea; we can get used to any kind of idea; more personally and immediately than that. In other words—in the event.

Roger Grainger

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

At the time of writing there is hope that the Measures concerning the ordination of women as presbyters will come to Parliament in the latter part of October.