

introductory resource, for their own use or for lending out to parishes in their Deanery.

A recent survey shows that the introduction of Common Worship has, on the whole, been smooth. There is still anguish about the Baptism Service—if only the energy and imagination being used to find ways around the new service were put into making it work!—and the predictable mixture of disappointment, anger and incredulity at the Collects.

Services for The Celebration of a New Ministry (institutions and licensings) have been devised. They meet the Bishops' request for services that recognize the importance of collaborative ministry and support their vision for parish life. These new services have been enthusiastically received throughout the Diocese.

Within the Group there is a sense of anti-climax and a feeling of lost momentum. The process of liturgical formation heralded at the York Conference in 2000 has stalled. Praxis South West appears to be defunct (if it's not defunct, then it has forgotten that Bath and Wells is in its area!) and there is a real sense of waiting for we know not what. We hope that the October Conference in London will give a renewed sense of direction to our work.

The Revd Julian Smith
Chairman, The Bishop's Liturgy Group

This month's publication . . .

. . . is Worship Series no 171, *Collects—an Alternative Way*, by Mark Earey, Tim Stratford, Gilly Myers and COB—this is perhaps a trailer for Paul Roberts' official alternative (but that has to go to the House of Bishops, General Synod and a Revision Committee before it is seen or heard in church on a Sunday—so perhaps there is scope for a pot-boiling trailer . . .)

. . . and next month's

is Joint Liturgical Study no 53, *Extended Communion*, by Alex Hughes. This is a thorough look at the meaning of administering and receiving communion away from the place of a true celebration of the eucharist, and the well-based theological reflections give rise to some very awkward questions for the rite and its practitioners.

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Editorial address: 37 South Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2UJ
Phone 0208-699-7771 Fax: 0208-699-7949
E-mail: bishop.colin@dswark.org.uk

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News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

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EDITORIAL

Perhaps I could use the silly season time to reflect on that Southwell motion about giving ministers discretion (by agreement with their PCCs) to dispense with the wearing of liturgical vesture. I am frequently asked what I think about it, and I have some history of involvement in the issue. The history is set out in the memorandum to which I referred in June, but I need to correct that reference, as the memorandum is strictly by David Hebblethwaite himself, and does not emanate from the Commission. (For more about David Hebblethwaite see further on in this NOL.) The memorandum records the history in very brief compass, which obviously has to go very fast through the origins of the Ornaments Rubric in the Book of Common Prayer, through the Canons of 1604, and through the nineteenth century disputes. When the Canons were last changed in 1993, I had worked hard with submissions to the Revision Committee to secure liberty for officiants not to be compelled into vesture which was unwanted by them and their congregation, at one point I reached a tie on the Revision Committee, settled against me by a chair's casting vote. In the upshot, the existing Canons require the president at holy communion to wear one of a range of outfits, and also require that 'Occasional Offices' should be conducted in robes. Morning and Evening Prayer are only mentioned on Sundays, and then the officiant should 'normally' be in alb or surplice, but obviously are by that wording not required to be. Southwell diocese, in their own memorandum explaining their motion, say it is 'a Motion with a forward-looking vision of a Church of England engaging with contextual mission and contemporary culture.'

First of all, it is perhaps worth noticing where with the existing Canons robes are not required. They are not enforced upon assisting clergy; they are not required for preachers, they are not part of lay distribution of sacramental elements. Interestingly, there seems to be no place where Readers are required to wear their blue scarves, which are themselves not mentioned in the Canons either on vesture or on Readers. Episcopal garb also seems to be unmentioned.

Secondly, I raise a point I have made here before. Canon B5 says that ministers may make changes of 'no substantial importance' in the conduct of public worship. I confidently interpret this as meaning that changes in vesture or the omission of it are 'of no substantial importance', for, whatever defences of robes may be put up, surely no-one can claim they are 'of substantial importance'. (I have more up my sleeve on this legal point.)

Thirdly, some bishops tell me that a high proportion of their clergy have given up robes (I have the opposite scenario to report - chasubles are almost *de rigueur* in the Woolwich Area). Quite a number of those are no doubt leading non-sacramental 'Services of the Word' more often than eucharistic rites; nevertheless it looks as though many clergy, without thinking about Canon B5, are doing what they think missionarily fit.

If we leave the Canons aside, I do think there is a very strong case for adapting the garb to the context. Dressing up for a cathedral event is one thing—wearing robes for people standing in a circle within touching distance of the president in an informal context feels completely different.

But, as shown above, I believe the legal provision is already there, and I shall suppress high emotions when the debate does come on.

Colin Buchanan

Footnote: I have been compiling NOL during the Commonwealth Games. Quite apart from omni-purpose flags of the cross of St George (was there ever such a show of them before—at least since Agincourt?), what do you make of 'Land of Hope and Glory' for celebrating English gold-medal winners? What are the alternatives—*Jerusalem*, or *Greensleeves*?

HAIL TO ROWAN WILLIAMS

It was called the 'worst-kept secret' of the establishment—and I guess I could confidently have put my own announcement in the July NOL. But here is a belated welcome to Archbishop Rowan Williams, officially announced on 23 July. Of course I am tempted to placard him as the herald of disestablishment, but the terms of reference of NOL suggest that I should look at his liturgical qualifications. In one sense we are more up to speed with Rowan Williams than we were twelve years ago with George Carey—in this case Rowan Williams is amongst our past authors, which his predecessor was not (George Carey contributed to a non-liturgical symposium after he took office and delighted my heart by saying he could see he had 'now hit the big-time'). Rowan Williams, however, was already in the big-time; and there is a little bit of a story attached.

In September 1979 the (old) Grove Liturgical Study was Richard Hanson's *Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Early Church* (Grove Lit Stud no 19), a reprint with additions of a lecture he had given in Dublin (and the Study is still available in print). The Group for Renewal of Worship (GROW) reckoned this so undercut most anglo-catholic expressions of a doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice, at least any based on patristic evidence, that it would be good to get a response from that school. Who should it be? We may have tried one or two and failed; then Nick Sagovsky suggested Rowan Williams, a young but very eminent Cambridge anglo-catholic. The nominee responded well—but did not want to be labelled as an anglo-catholic in any representative sense, and wanted to handle the patristic evidence in his own way,

Homilies of the Fourth Century (St Paul Publications 1972), and his joint editorship of the Oxford-based ecumenical volume *The Study of Liturgy* (Oxford, 1978, rev.ed.1992). The former of these gives four sermons on baptism (by Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia), with introduction and notes. The latter is a comprehensive treatment of worship in all main traditions down all of history, and Ted Yarnold is not a joint editor but a substantial contributor in the field of patristic liturgy (largely initiatory). But he was also one of the most notable English Roman Catholic participants in the work of ARCIC I and ARCIC II from 1969 to 1991; and his work, in not only helping draft the Statements but in promoting good relationships between the two Communion, led Robert Runcie to award him the Cross of the Order of St Augustine for his ecumenical services. He also published books on Anglican-Roman relationships. The obituarist in *The Times* (5 August) recorded his own disappointment at the 'cool' reception given to the ARCIC Statements by the Vatican.

I debated with him once, and found him (what I think the ARCIC experience showed) a traditionalist Roman Catholic with a tough apologia for that position, who was nevertheless prepared to go quite a very considerable distance in reinterpreting to help ecumenical understanding. Radical he was not—but he was a splendid exemplar of that which he was. There are perhaps all too few such Roman Catholic theologians around in England today.

COB

SOCIETY FOR LITURGICAL STUDY—LAST MINUTE CORRECTION

The SLS holds its biennial conference at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, from Tuesday 27 August to Thursday 29 August this year. NOL got the venue right in May and June (qv), but did so only by changing an erroneous mention of Plater College, Oxford, at proof stage. The (nearly) inevitable happened—that the uncorrected text went forward into July to mislead readers. If you are opening this NOL on the way to Oxford, please divert to Yorkshire, and accept our apologies. Our hope is that anyone actually going would have been in touch with the secretary, Carol Wilkinson (52 Lowick Drive, Poulton le Fylde, Lancs FY6 8HB (01253-622324)—E-mail: cwilkinson@swilkinson.ndirect.co.uk)—and she will have served you better than we have done.

DIOCESAN REPORT (2001-2 CYCLE)—16 BATH AND WELLS

The Bishop's Liturgy Group was re-formed in 1996 and given the task of overseeing the introduction of Common Worship in the Diocese. The Group sought to recruit a 'link person' in each Deanery who would be resourced and supported by the Group and would be the immediate reference point for that Deanery. Archdeaconry Training Days were run to introduce the Initiation Services and further training sessions focussed on other aspects of Common Worship.

Deanery Links were given 'Praxis' Training Packs, which proved the ideal

James Kirk, *When we gather: A book of prayers for Years A, B and C* (Geneva Press, 2002, ISBN 0 664 50114 1)

This is a book of prayers for each Sunday of the year, following the lectionary readings. The author (an American Presbyterian pastor) has the aim of using the whole of the word of God in the lectionary provision to inform and direct our worship and prayer. So, he explains, 'there is, for each Sunday, a Call to Worship, which concentrates on the Psalm for the day. The Prayer of Praise and Adoration puts in narrative form some of the thoughts contained in the psalm. The Litany of Confession or Affirmation draws its inspiration from the gospel, while the Prayer of Dedication looks to thoughts contained in the gospel lesson. Often the Prayer of Thanksgiving and Supplication will seek out themes from the OT lesson.'

It is refreshing to have a book of prayers which includes so much more than intercessions, and using the Bible to inform our prayers in so many ways is a reminder that we often need. But although the theory is laudable, does it work in practice?

Some of the Call to Worship material works well but the phrases used often seem rather convoluted—keeping closer to one translation of the psalms would have worked better. The Prayer of Praise ties up these responsive psalm words in a prayer. The prayers of Confession and Absolution (of limited use in an Anglican setting), could be more succinct, more tightly worded, and the Confessions could more often say 'sorry', and the Absolutions (Assurance of Pardon) mention forgiveness! The Prayer of Dedication might provide material to use as a prayer after the teaching or sermon, if it was based on the gospel for the day. The Prayers of Thanksgiving are rather long, and run the danger of repeating the sermon, as well as not being clear whether they are praise, thanksgiving or petition.

There is a very useful index at the back of the book listing biblical references, with the Sunday of the particular year they occur, so this resource could be useful for those not following the lectionary all the year. I think this is one of those books which does not translate to the UK very successfully. Many of the prayers appear, to an average English Anglican, to be long, wordy and full of conflicting ideas and images. I doubt that many would find them useful for main Sunday worship, though there may be occasions for special services when some of the material would be useful.

Liz Simpson

AND A PRICE

NB: The memoir of Charles Whitaker reviewed last month costs £2 (plus 50p packing and postage) from the author, Canon Bill Kelly, 73 Upperby Road, Carlisle, CA2 4JE)

IN MEMORIAM—EDWARD YARNOLD

Ted Yarnold, SJ, died on 23 July at the age of 76. Formed and ordained before Vatican II, he was a strongly post-Vatican II ecumenist and theologian. In the liturgical field, he would perhaps most be noted for his *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal*

rather than simply play second on a chessboard set up by Richard Hanson. He therefore offered his own essay—so it became, *Eucharistic Sacrifice—The Roots of a Metaphor* (old Grove Liturgical Study no 31, 1982). The Study is hauntingly interesting, and the last copies have recently been sold out: would it now be sense to reprint it? There were further developments—GROW held a conference on the subject, and that led to a further issue in that series, COB (ed) *Essays on Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Early Church* (old Grove Liturgical Study no 40, 1984), also still in print, and containing a further essay by Rowan Williams.

None of this bears upon Rowan Williams' forthcoming archiepiscopate. This journal will be interested in his enthronement liturgy (shall we for the third time have a Nicene Creed interjected specifically in order to be able to omit the *Filioque*?). We shall also be interested to discover his response to the revision of the Ordinal. We hope to reveal his specific input in Wales. But perhaps—in the wisdom of God and the compliance of Tony Blair—we all have things to look forward to. Pray for him.

GENERAL SYNOD—MARRIAGE QUESTIONS

We omitted in July the two sets of decisions on marriage questions which the General Synod took at York.

The first was related to marriage law and in it the Synod gave general support to proposed changes in the law, such as to break the present limitations presented by parish boundaries.

The second related to the Church of England's internal discipline. Here the Synod passed the following motion:

'That this Synod

- (a) affirm, in accordance with the doctrine of the Church of England as set out in Canon B30, that marriage should always be undertaken as a "solemn, public and lifelong covenant between a man and a woman";
- (b) recognize:
 - (i) that some marriages regrettably do fail and that the Church's care for couples in that situation should be of paramount importance; and
 - (ii) that there are exceptional circumstances in which a divorced person may be married in Church during the lifetime of a former spouse;
- (c) recognize that the decision as to whether or not to solemnize such a marriage in church after divorce rests with the minister (or the officiating cleric if the minister is prepared to allow his/her church or chapel to be used for the marriage) and;
- (d) invite the House of Bishops to issue the advice contained in Annex 1 of GS 1449.' [NOL will print this advice next month].

This motion was carried on a count of the whole Synod of 269-83.

The Synod then rescinded the Marriage Resolutions of Canterbury Convocation of May 1957 and of York Convocation of June 1938—the Resolutions which thus far have called upon the clergy not to officiate at such marriages.

FAREWELL TO DAVID HEBBLETHWAITE

David Hebblethwaite's retirement was mentioned last month, but on 23 July, at exactly the time every other journalist was wanting to interview the Archbishop of Wales, I was able to interview David. I found he had waiting for me his own self-description excerpted from a briefing document he had prepared for Philip Mawer in 2000. This gave a skeletal outline about the secretarial needs and provision of the Liturgical Commission from the mid-1960s onwards, and showed how he, David, had fitted into this. However, I was able to ask some wider questions, and I report these first of all.

COB: David, how did you first get interested in liturgy?

DH: Well, I was at church through my schooldays, but it was perhaps architecture which sparked me off; and in that I was given an extra interest through a schoolmaster who organized each Easter an architectural tour, and every third year it was a tour of churches.

COB: And after leaving school?

DH: Well, after graduating, I went to the (then famous) Birmingham School of Liturgy and Architecture in the mid-1960s (the days of J.G. Davies and Gilbert Cope) and did their post-grad Diploma. And perhaps the mention of architecture demonstrates my concern that texts are only one component of liturgy.

COB: So did you then seek a job in liturgy?

DH (*smiling*): Realistically, it wasn't there. I got a job as an established member of the Church Commissioners staff; and the most I did in the field of liturgy was to be a layman on the Bishop of Kensington's Area Liturgical Committee.

COB: Oh, what was that committee doing?

DH: Well, two things: firstly, we were processing the questionnaire on Series 2 communion; and, secondly (and inevitably), we were revising the institution service.

COB: So how did you come by liturgy as part of your job-description?

DH: Well, it was almost by mistake. I became Derek Pattinson's Private Secretary in September 1977, and that meant I was minutes secretary for the House of Bishops. Then, when some tension arose between the House of Bishops and the Liturgical Commission about the revision of Series 3 Communion (particularly in respect of the anamnesis), I became secretary of the sub-committee of the House of Bishops who were having to deal with the Liturgical Commission over it.

COB: Had you arrived on the liturgy scene?

DH: No, not really, as it was a limited job—and I had (and up to the present still have had) other tasks to fulfil, like being secretary to the Dioceses Commission. What actually happened was that a secretary was needed as assistant to Lionel Wadson for the imminent Revision Committee on the revised Series 3 text, and the task in prospect was pretty enormous. Derek Pattinson decided between two of us almost by the toss of a coin, rather than a sober estimate of qualifications, let alone by asking for applications.

rather than systematic style. Perhaps his charismatic self gets its fullest outing at the end of chapter 1:

'Now compare this [a choir singing a setting of the Gloria in Excelsis] with how the world would celebrate an equivalent event, where there is something to get excited about. Imagine your football team is in the habit of winning matches. How would the supporters celebrate this week by week? Depending on the scale there would certainly be applause, probably some singing or chanting of something simple and repetitive. Some sort of physical movement—possibly dancing, maybe waving of arms, clapping above the head—might accompany this. There may be sounding of simple instruments, pushing and swaying, shouting of acclamation . . .'

The book is greatly enlivened by the author's colourful (and well observed) experiences of life, not least his sabbatical among the Cherokees. But I have wondered about his key title word—he is not so much offering us 'tools', as telling us to use the whole range of tools we already have, and how to use them. And he is constantly teaching by contrast—a highly effective and even piercing way of communication. But it does depend upon the clarity of the contrasting; and I am unsure that when Jesus said we should love God with all our hearts, souls and minds, he was necessarily delineating priorities in which "mind" still comes a poor third; I am unsure whether he can himself sustain the disjunction he makes between liturgy and worship (you can guess which is the real goodie); I don't believe you should draw an evaluative contrast between saying things about God and saying things to him in worship; and I am fairly sure he has overdone the distinction between 'word' and all other means of communication. There is a wonderfully drawn contrast between 'liturgical erectitude' and 'liturgical supinity'—and when it is unpacked, lo and behold, it is supinity which is virtuous, erectitude which is not. Who would have guessed? He is fond of candles (though not uncritically so)—but is it 'either a testimony or a candle?' (in which he is clear that the candle is better). Yes, actions may speak louder than words (p.117), but do they speak *instead* of words? And would they speak if there were no revelation of God by word, a revelation that is *known* by those using actions, behind them? What indeed would they speak without such a revelation? And how would we know whether it was right? And even music is there to enhance and implant the word, and it only functions Christianly without the accompanying word when in fact the word is already known and taken for granted.

I gather it was Peter Craig-Wild who initiated the Wakefield diocesan motion on collects which led the General Synod's assent that we need new ones. So there is a concern for words there—and his time on the Liturgical Commission will now be giving him constant word-experience. And I expect for his part he would think I am being over-defensive of Reformation principles, and that I have pushed him too harshly into an 'either-or' mould. And I quickly applaud his passionate concern for multi-dimensional worship, and honour his own record as a practitioner. I expect we shall be hearing from him again—and not only about collects.

COB

CUBE REVIEW

The Communion Cube (National Society/CHP, many facets, £4.95)

My review cube came with a second edition (ie of 2002) of Diana Murrie's *My Communion Book* (CHP, £4.50), which is sub-titled *A Child's Guide to Holy Communion*. The two belong together, though the cube acknowledges some part taken by 'The Bookube Company Ltd. Bath' and was (amazingly) 'Made in China'. The pictures, text, and lay-out (conforming to the structure of the eucharist) show a close family relationship.

In one sense—the obvious one—the cube is more attractive. It breaks open in successively different directions, and those following its route find themselves going through the eucharistic structure. It gives something for little hands to play with; and it is certainly instructional and educational. On the other hand, a cube which 'breaks' like this seems to be designed for eight moves in quick succession, whereas moving it along to see each face just once in a sequence which is going to last over a period of 65-75 minutes sounds a recipe for patience which 4-year-olds may not have! My own first trial, taking it to a vicarage family last Sunday, suggested only a butterfly-like interest.

But perhaps it is not at its best in marching *pari passu* with an actual celebration. Perhaps it is for the home, where a five-minute period of cube-flipping with parental guidance will help kiddies with a short attention-span take aboard the structure and purpose of the eucharist. I should think it would be a boon for godparents of children in worshipping families looking for Christmas presents with a religious motif, and it is at least possible and imaginable that it would be received in the spirit in which it was given.

COB

BOOK REVIEWS

Peter Craig-Wild, *Tools for Transformation: Making Worship Work* (DLT, 2002, x/150 pp, £10.95)

Peter Craig-Wild, interestingly located in the parish of Mirfield, is an anglo-catholic who has found a home amongst charismatics, and has reflected at some depth on what makes the people of God tick when they meet for worship. I think his basic thesis is that evangelicals have been too word-centred and catholics too tied to a specific ritualist programme. However, it is perhaps not surprising, granted his personal journey, that his greatest aversion is from any word-centred programme. The first chapter is entitled 'Word, Word, Word!' The Reformation and printing come in for a hard knock at an early stage, and get dubbed 'The Renaissance' (and a *fons et origo* of many troubles) thereafter. Willow Creek, to take but one instance, is 'pure Reformation culture'. The ASB also perishes under the same condemnation; while Common Worship promises rather more—though this (and here he is absolutely right) is dependent upon how it is used (is it petty of me to say the same was true of the ASB?). There is, lurking in the offing, a better way, and this emerges in glimpsed

- COB: Well, I chaired the Steering Committee within that Revision Committee, so I have a keen memory of it. What sticks in your mind?
- DH: Oh, several things—George Timms in the chair (in the absence of Cyril Bowles), the vast quantity of paper, the way people who came to make a five-minute submission sat in on all the other people's submission times, and the Beckwith-Brindley initiative which led to the Third Eucharistic Prayer.
- COB: I could add to that; but I suppose my main recollection is of the sessions in full Synod at the Revision Stage, when the notice papers which carried the three hundred amendments (uniquely in my experience) came out on A4 sheets not folded.
- DH: Ah, but I had gone by then—I returned to Millbank in February 1979 and only observed the last stages from that distance.
- COB: And you were not involved with the Commission itself?
- DH: No, that did not happen till 1984, when Keith Reading ceased. Although my interest was known, yet again [here quoting from his own self-description document] 'In those days, of course, there was no question of "applying", I was deployed.'
- COB: And in these years of the technology revolution, whilst you have been serving the Commission, is it true that you have handled neither typewriter nor computer?
- DH: Absolutely true. [*Showing COB sheafs of not-very-legible handwritten notes*] These are the notes I took during meetings, and I wrote them up afterwards in longhand (or more recently dictated them onto a tape for my secretary, and would then vet her transcription).
- COB: I find that astonishing—I recall Geoffrey Cuming, who was of an era well before ours, saying in the early 1980s that it was becoming unimaginable how we had ever done liturgical revision without word processing.
- DH: Well, computers were first of all an enormous kind of machine of which there was only one in Church House, and then became equipment given to the people who previously had electric typewriters. So I never qualified—and now I'm glad I didn't.
- COB: I would love to ask you more, but tell me this—is there anything you particularly hug yourself about when you look back on the twenty-five years of close involvement in liturgical revision?
- DH: I'm not sure there is any one thing. But I am immensely glad to have been part of the most tumultuous twenty-five years of Anglican revision since the sixteenth century. And also (and here you [COB] might not agree with me) I am glad we incorporated the traditional material alongside the contemporary.
- COB: And now? Do have a gleam in your eye about anything?
- DH: No, I've no special project. But I keep an interest in the whole field, and I belong to the Alcuin Club and SLS, and expect to receive stimulus—and to go on being an ordinary worshipper.

David Hebblethwaite was awarded the OBE for services to the Church of England. . . . He may remain largely unknown to vast numbers of happy Common Worship worshippers. I think he himself would modestly claim that having the opportunities that have come uniquely to him is sufficient reward, though the Commission members who toasted him in June gave him a multi-coloured waistcoat. My point is that the whole Church of England owes him a great debt of thanks. It sounds from the above as though his liturgical services span exactly a quarter of a century. So, thank you indeed, David. Take the OBE by all means, but take a bow from the rest of us also.

THE SILLY SEASON

The London *Evening Standard* on 26 July carried a story of a fire at a wedding service. The report went as follows:

'Halfway through their wedding ceremony at the Baptist Church in Godley, Manchester, the organ caught fire and filled the church with smoke and ashes. At first some of the 50 guests thought it was incense and took no notice of the clouds of smoke that billowed out at the side of the altar. But when the organ burst into flames . . .'

How often have you, gentle reader, experienced incense at a Baptist Church? But perhaps these guests were innocents.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Colin,

This amused me, and might amuse others too.

On Sunday night I was watching *As Time Goes By*. The episode revolved round the plans for a wedding, and of course included parts of the church ceremony.

The vicar was (naturally) the usual drippy TV caricature but, surprise, surprise, they seemed to be using the Common Worship provision. Modern words—no obeying for the bride, and the return to 'let no one put asunder'. I sat up and looked more closely. The vicar was indeed holding a Common Worship book—but it was a black one, with a red and a black ribbon marker clearly visible. Not the pastoral book, with the marriage service, which is the green one . . . It was a good job he had learnt the words and wasn't reckoning on reading them!

So do we give them points for trying? And for taking account of the new services? Or do we say (with exasperation) that they could make more of an effort to get it right?

Best wishes

Anna de Lange

Dear Colin

Towards the end of last September I asked you why all Anglican liturgical worship up to the present time has avoided using the word 'please', when making requests of God.

I wonder if you, or any of your fellow liturgiologists, have come to any conclusions?

Concerning the future, should the word 'please' be considered as suitable for use in liturgical worship in the twenty-first century? Or are there good reasons why it should still be avoided?

Yours

David Steele, Abbots Worthy, Winchester

Dear Colin,

To bow or not to bow?

I write with reference to the diverting issue of bowing to or 'reverencing' the altar/holy table discussed in the June issue of NOL.

I was trained as a Reader 44 years ago by a doughty Church of Ireland cleric for whom the practice was papistical and thus anathema for all who claimed to stand within the Reformed tradition. However he did on one occasion concede that if one felt constrained to bow before any item of church furniture it ought to be the lectern upon which Holy Scripture was placed. Years later, when discussing the same issue in a post-ordination training class, a charismatic curate stated that he would prefer to bow to the font, as this symbolized the start of Christian pilgrimage as well as the spiritual waters of renewal.

This leads me to wonder if judicious liturgical observance could not embrace each of these practices. When processing for (say) a cathedral service would it not be possible for clergy and others to divide into three sections according to their personal preference and process to the font, lectern and holy table there to perform a reverential bow? They would then converge at a central point, probably in the nave, where the separate columns would bow to each other, in the manner commonly practised by oriental believers.

I realize that such a radical move would pose logistical problems, but it should not be beyond the wit of liturgical experts to overcome these. Could not Praxis provide seminars for cathedral clergy and vergers, perhaps buying in the services of a drill sergeant from HM Brigade of Guards to coach them in the skills of interweaving several squads of clergy processing from different points of the compass? Surely in today's more tolerant climate, when varieties of vesture and devotional practices are not only permitted but positively encouraged, it should be possible for worshippers to reverence different liturgical foci? Would this not be a splendid demonstration of the Anglican *via media* (or in Blairite parlance, the 'third way')?

Yours eirenically

Pat Dearnley, Ilkley

[To confirm the silly season Pat Dearnley also submits details of the release of a dove at an institution in a Yorkshire diocese. But perhaps it is not silly—the rite concerned says the dove is released 'as a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit'. What happens if this sign becomes *de rigueur* . . . or the dove disappears too fast or declines to fly at all?]