

PARSON AND PARISH

is published by

THE ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION

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The Lord Bishop of London

Founded by the Rev'd EDWARD G. COURTMAN in 1938

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The English Clergy Association, as the successor to the Parochial Clergy Association, exists to support in fellowship all Clerks in Holy Orders in their Vocation and Ministry within the Church of England as by law Established; to uphold the Parson's Freehold within the traditional understanding of the Church's life and witness; to oppose unnecessary bureaucracy in the Church; to monitor legislative and other processes of change; and to promote in every available way the good of English Parish and Cathedral Life and the welfare of the Clergy.

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PARSON & PARISH

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FROM OVER THE PARAPET

Editorial

Putting the difficult bit in the title

Many will recall the splendid television series *Yes, Minister* which probably bore an uncomfortably close resemblance to reality. Sir Humphrey's advice, when drafting legislative proposals, was "always dispose of the difficult bit in the title." We may be forgiven for concluding that his advice was taken by those drafting the Pastoral Measure 1983, and we make no apology for returning again to the way in which powers contained in this legislation are often used in a manner which is far from being *pastoral*.

The latest Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and related Measures has not yet been completed, so the subject is certainly topical. At the same time, because of the continuing shortage of stipendiary clergy, several dioceses are embarking upon major strategic reviews of their parochial structures and ministerial provision. There is talk of new ministries emerging, new ways of "being church", and of the need to "manage" change. Parish boundaries, we are told, are increasingly having little significance, and greater collaborative patterns of ministry are developing.

Yet the Pastoral Measure 1983, flying in the face of Sir Humphrey's advice, and like the legislative provision before it, was intended to be genuinely pastoral. Its very preamble speaks of making "better provision for the cure of souls". It is concerned to protect the rights of Her Majesty's subjects – be they patrons, parochial church council members, or those resident in the parish. It is a Measure containing checks and balances.

Living in suspense

Perhaps nowhere is this more obvious than in the matter of suspension of the right of presentation. Tucked away in part of the Measure entitled "Miscellaneous, Administrative and General", in section 67, lies a power, the excessive use of which – and sometimes the abuse of which – has contributed to a culture of mistrust and suspicion of what "the Diocese" may be scheming next. In human terms, the misery and insecurity inflicted on parishioners, parsons and their families, cannot be adequately described.

It is worth making a few points about this power. First, it is not a general instrument for the wholesale redeployment of the clergy. The power given to the diocesan bishop to suspend a patron's right to present a priest to a

living (enabling a temporary and removable priest-in-charge to be deployed instead) is ancillary and subservient to the Measure's pastoral purpose. Secondly, the fact that the consent of the diocesan pastoral committee is required by the legislation indicates that suspension may only or normally take place pending pastoral reorganisation, a view taken by leading ecclesiastical lawyers, and shared by the Code of Recommended Practice which complements the Measure. Thirdly, the power is only exercisable after various statutory consultations have taken place: with the patron, the PCC, and other interested parties. To the weary and cynical, "consultation" may sound an empty word, but the Code insists that "it will be apparent that the bishop should not have made his mind up before carrying out these statutory consultations; ...his letter... should indicate that the matter is open and that he is consulting them so that he can take their views properly into account when he comes to make his decision." (paragraph 9.22). Fourthly, the bishop is required by the Measure to inform those being consulted of the reasons why he is considering whether he should exercise his power to suspend.

Yet compare and contrast the reality. Stories come to our ears — like that of the churchwarden munching his toast and marmalade before dashing off to work, when a hurried phone call from the bishop turns out later to have been the "consultation". Leaving aside anecdote, and turning to hard copy on the editorial desk, a bland-looking letter "for information only" comes from a diocesan secretariat referring to the bishop's intention to suspend, expressing the hope that the churchwarden will feel able to accept consultation by exchange of letters — not quite what the legislation had in mind. Another bishop claims that his "reasons" for wanting to suspend lie in a strategy document accepted by his diocesan synod, yet on the ground in the deanery there are no direct plans for reorganisation at all. "At the end of the day," says the bishop, "it is the need for some flexibility which I find persuasive." The latest example to come to our attention concerns a parish where every five years for some thirty years the power to suspend has been exercised ("reviews" the archdeacon concerned, tamely calls them). Here the reason for the most recent proposed re-suspension is "the deanery's desire for maximum flexibility... to enable the exploration of the possibility of pastoral reorganisation." The archdeacon speaks encouragingly of "experiments of all kinds which [become] possible" only when the right of presentation is suspended.

Flexibility, exploration, and experiments. These are now the justifications for exercising a power which takes away from the parish and patron their yearning for a "proper Vicar", rather than a temporary priest on a mere licence, with restricted rights, lack of security of tenure and reduced prophetic independence. Of course we realise that, at a time of shortage

of both clergy and money, the idea that every parish can have its own parson is a hopeless pipe-dream. Yet arbitrary and wilful misuse of existing powers cannot be the way forward. There are procedures to be carried out, due process to be followed, and proper and genuine consultation to be engaged in with interested parties. We may not be able to find the funding for judicial review when the law is misapplied, though we hope that those with financial backing may be encouraged to do so; but we can at least do our best to publish abroad bishops and archdeacons behaving badly by riding roughshod over the rights of parishioners, patrons and PCCs.

As ever, your Association endeavours to remain vigilant.

NOTICE

AGM Monday 17th May AD2004

by kind permission of the

Rector and Churchwardens

in

St.Giles-in-the Fields, London WC1

AGM at 12.30 pm,

Holy Communion at 1 pm,

followed by a buffet lunch

and the

Annual Address at 2 pm

*As last year, this event is also aimed to function as
a conference for Churchwardens and
Private Patrons and their Clergy*

PRIME MINISTER AND CHURCH

Margaret Laird pays tribute to the work of the

Third Marquess of Salisbury

— and welcomes the Seventh as a Vice-President

Many readers will already be aware of the death in July of the Sixth Marquess of Salisbury, one of the Association's Vice-Presidents. Lord Salisbury took a serious interest in the Association and was a regular reader of *Parson and Parish*. As each edition appeared, he would comment on the matters raised by the articles it contained, especially if they affected the rights of the patrons, parishes and clergy. He was a faithful Anglican, who greatly valued the daily worship in the chapel at Hatfield House, which he attended until the day before his death and where he insisted on the use of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

The year 2003 was also the centenary of the death of his great grandfather, the Third Marquess, and the last of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers. He too had been a loyal and devoted member of the Church of England. Letters stored amongst the archives at Hatfield House show that, in addition to his many government responsibilities, he found time to be actively involved with Church affairs both at home and abroad.

When the Third Marquess was an undergraduate at Christchurch, he was strongly influenced by Edward Pusey, and Andrew Roberts, the biographer of Lord Salisbury, comments that it was Tractarianism which provided the main spiritual and intellectual influence on the future Prime Minister. The two men had great respect for each other and after Pusey's death the Marquess chaired the appeal for the setting up of Pusey House — its chapel and its library.

The letters at Hatfield show that Lord Salisbury often sought and received Dr. Pusey's advice on so many matters both secular and religious. When the Marquess was Secretary of State for India, before he became Prime Minister, Pusey gave him advice on the training of men for the Civil Service, particularly for those destined to work in the India Office. "Altogether," he wrote, "I am disappointed at the seeming meagreness of the course of study, which the Civil Service Commissioners seem to have laid down." Men destined for India, he thought, should receive a longer and more intensive training because they needed more time in which to acquire a knowledge of several Eastern languages, including Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian and Hindustani. Pusey then adds a personal note to prove the point. Arabic, he admitted, was the most difficult language he had learnt. "I had to

employ,” he wrote, “twelve to fourteen hours a day (Sundays excepted) for ten months on this exclusive study....and Sanskrit is so much harder.”

When Lord Salisbury became Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Dr. Pusey wrote a letter to him expressing concern about a clerical Fellow, who was causing problems in one of the Colleges. “A half believing clergyman is practically much more mischievous and his unbelief much more offensive than that of a half believing layman,” was the sentence with which he concluded this letter.

Aware of Lord Salisbury’s commitment to the Church, Dr. Pusey wrote to him in 1878 about the abysmal standard of worship in some of the East London churches. “Spiritual desolation is extreme,” he commented, adding, “Nothing seems to be going on.... there is no-one seemingly to speak the word for God or to their souls. As far as Christianity is concerned they had better be in Central Africa. The accession of five or six worshippers is hailed as a gain among empty pews or benches.”

Dr. Pusey knew that Lord Salisbury would be as distressed as he himself was by what he had heard about some of the clergy, who seemed unaware of their pastoral responsibilities. “In other parts of East London,” he wrote, “I hear that the clergy are non-resident — and many pass the week in the suburbs.” This letter ended with a significant sentence which reflected how highly Dr. Pusey rated the importance of a priest’s involvement with his people. “A population unvisited in the week will not come to church on Sunday,” he stated.

Dr. Pusey felt that it was important for Lord Salisbury to be informed firsthand about the social problems which accentuated the necessity for pastoral care. “Drink and what follows from drink are the habits of the population. The children are inured to drink as soon as they can carry the pewter pot which contains it.... the police do not interfere,” he wrote. He also quoted for Lord Salisbury an extract from the findings of a report on the state of education in East London. “In two parishes out of seven, there are no weekday schools. In five out of seven there were no night schools.”

Pusey, however, did not wish to place all the blame on the clergy. “It is no use,” he wrote, “urging the cry, ‘the clergy must do more work’ until they have a leader. They are wearied and out of heart and cannot work for want of strong sympathy and leadership — of a heart and mind that can forth these gifts....” In other words, Pusey is hinting, they needed a new bishop.

Aware that there was to be an episcopal vacancy and knowing that the Marquess could well be influential in advising on the new appointment, Pusey was forthright in writing to his friend about the sort of man he envisaged for the job. “The remedy must be a bishop, who should have

good powers of energising, who would be the means of enthusing new life into East London.... tolerant and with an organising mind.” He realised that a high Churchman (who would have been pleasing to both himself and the Marquess) might not have been acceptable to Her Majesty, but he concluded, “Even a high Churchman is tolerable if gifted.”

The interest of the Third Marquess in the work of the Church of England also extended to the pastoral care of English people living in Europe. He gave generous financial assistance to the building of the very attractive basilica-type Anglican Church of St Michael in Beaulieu-sur-Mer. The architect was Temple-Moore, who also designed the Pusey House chapel. Lord Salisbury himself had built a villa in Beaulieu, where he and his family often stayed, when Queen Victoria was in the South of France.

For Anglicans now living in Beaulieu, 2003 was of particular significance, for that year was the centenary of the consecration of St. Michael’s Church. The Chaplain, Canon Roger Greenacre, arranged a festival programme of church services, lectures, concerts, an exhibition and an ecumenical procession to mark the event. There was also an official lunch attended by the religious and civic leaders of the town and many other guests.

The Salisbury connection, however, was not forgotten, and present at the centenary Eucharist at which the Archbishop of York celebrated and preached and which was attended by the British Ambassador to France, were the Dowager Marchioness of Salisbury and several other members of the Cecil family. Dr. Hugh Cecil, a great grandson of the Third Marquess, gave a witty and penetrating lecture, entitled, “Lord Salisbury, English Statesman at Beaulieu.”

The interest of the Third Marquess in such a wide range of church life was indeed impressive. It is therefore with considerable pleasure that we welcome the Seventh Marquess as a new Vice-President. We are aware that amongst his many responsibilities he is also President of the Prayer Book Society and we have no doubt that he intends to follow in the tradition of this historic family, which for generations has given loyal and active support to the Church of England.

Margaret Laird, Deputy-Chairman of the Association, was formerly Third Church Estates Commissioner.

STRIPPED NAKED

*John Ryder, in a book review with a difference,
compares Roman and Anglican parish clergy
— and asks what priests really think they're doing*

The recent book *The Naked Parish Priest: what priests really think they're doing* (by Stephen Louden and Leslie Francis), in which Roman Catholic priests in England and Wales are surveyed about what they feel and think upon a number of issues, makes strange reading for an Anglican English priest. We are living in the same country at the same time and ostensibly doing the same thing, and many issues and attitudes do strike strong chords of sympathy, yet one feels one is reading about a different country, a different age.

As a book written unashamedly by English Roman Catholics for English Roman Catholics there is a lot not relevant to the Anglican, and of only marginal interest, such as the frequent references to the slight differences in attitude or belief between the secular and the religious parish priest. This can seem repetitive and get boring. Of no greater relevance, but of somewhat greater interest, are their opinions on the value of such things as Vatican II and the present Pope.

Where similar questions *can* be asked of both Roman Catholic and Anglican clergy, the differences between us, especially for a traditional Catholic or Evangelical Anglican, are interesting — and sometimes frightening. I will be tabling the results of the few questions which are comparable with those asked in the recent Cost of Conscience survey of English Anglican clergy later in this article; but if anyone tried to do for Anglican clergy what Louden and Francis did for Roman Catholic clergy in producing this book, I believe they would meet with even greater opposition from their hierarchy, get few responses, and find less faith. For while we may be better prepared than they by our training for dealing with people and the secular world, we are on average far less educated in matters religious, not least because far less is expected of us by our bishops and theological colleges.

But before going on to a comparison of statistics, a few comments and quotes from the book may whet your appetite. I admit the selection may also say much about me and my opinion of the Church of England at the present time. All references are to Roman clergy serving in England and Wales.

It seems incontestable that in developed countries Catholicism seems to have forgotten the value of keeping alive in the heart of religious experience the non-rational element of religion. — p.53

Among his own people (the parish priest said) 5% gave uncritical support. Another 5% much more noisily complained and without ceasing. The remaining 90% simply gave an impression of cold indifference. — p.60

I like being a priest but the presbytery system with no defined job description or on/off hours is too stressful. I do not feel lonely; rather I long for a place of my own where I can relax and be myself. Hence my “dream”, to retire from a presbytery as soon as I am financially independent, i.e. by 65 years! (priest aged between 35 and 39). — p.61

After reading what priests have written about strong feelings of isolation and overwork, one cannot help concluding that in the context of a profession whose *raison d’etre* is often seen as essentially caring for others, the Catholic Church appears strikingly deficient in providing support for its key members. — p.62

The more he is treated like a priest, the more like a priest he becomes. The converse here is also likely to be true. The less like a priest he is treated, the less like a priest he becomes.

It is an abiding wonder to priests what real or imagined gifts are possessed by many of those men who are appointed bishops (priest aged between 55 and 59). — p.117

As far as the Catholic clergy are concerned, from an empirical perspective at least, this belief in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine constitutes an immutable bedrock of faith. — p.119

Unfortunately, ecumenism is seen by some, not as an invitation to engage in hard and demanding thinking, but as an excuse for abandoning it. — p.139

The higher the regard in which a priest is held within a community and the better this is communicated to the priest himself, the more this will contribute to warding off burnout, as social status appears to be a notable environmental factor affecting self-efficacy. — p.164

The book also gives some interesting statistics. One in three clergy suffers from depression. 73% believe celibacy is essential to the priesthood. 32% feel Rome has too readily accepted Anglican married clergy. 62% believe papal supremacy is necessary for Church unity. 44% of clergy believe Anglican Orders to be invalid, and only 25% disagree. 14% of clergy acknowledge that they are burnt out, yet from their answers 33% probably are. Burnout is greater amongst the younger clergy. Paedophilia is regarded as a very serious breach of morality, and homosexuality almost as greater.

But to have broken one's vow of celibacy, with a woman (even if she is married) is regarded as something of little import. Yet on most key questions of moral and doctrinal orthodoxy 97% could answer in the affirmative!

And now the promised comparison with the Cost of Conscience research. This is not totally fair, as the questions were not worded in exactly the same way. Where the differences are significant I have put them; in all cases if the Anglicans had been asked the same questions as the Romans I think the differences between us would have been even more significant. I have also included, for interest, details of beliefs in Anglican clergy who belong to Forward in Faith (a "traditionalist" grouping) and Affirming Catholicism (a "liberal" Catholic grouping).

Belief	Roman Catholic	Church of England	CofE clergy in Forward in Faith	CofE clergy in Affirming Catholicism
Bodily resurrection of Jesus	97%	66%	83%	35%
Virginal conception of Jesus	94%	51%	82%	24%
Divorced and remarried —should be admitted to Communion	49%			
—should be allowed to be ordained to the priesthood	67%	25%	85%	
Total ban on euthanasia	85%	68%	84%	56%
Total ban on abortion	92%	66%	91%	46%
A priest who practises homosexuality should be barred from ministry	65%			
Practising homosexuals should be ordained		31%	18%	64%

Even though I have a fairly good knowledge of the Church of Rome through family and circumstance, this book gave me many new insights into it, especially into the situation in England and Wales. It is a very valuable piece of research for those who are English Roman Catholics, and especially for those involved in the recruiting and training of priests; and very interesting for those wishing to join Rome. But for the committed Anglican without a special interest it is far too laboured and detailed to be an enjoyable read. Yet if you can spare the £14.99 to add it to your bookshelf, it is an interesting book to dip into, and useful for arguments.

The Revd John Ryder is Vicar of Godshill, Isle of Wight, in the Anglican Diocese of Portsmouth.

The Naked Parish Priest: what priest really think they're doing is published by Continuum (2003, 232pp, paperback, £14.99, ISBN 0-8264-6798-9).

The statistics concerning English Anglican clergy are drawn from Believe it or not! — a summary (with commentary by Robbie Low and Francis Gardom) of clergy replies to questions about their beliefs as published in the Mind of Anglicans survey conducted by Christian Research, for Cost of Conscience, in 2002.

“REVEREND SIR”

John Masding on addressing clergy and observing courtesies

Eric Sykes made a wonderful cameo part out of Sir Oliver Martext, the clergyman in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* at the Theatre Royal, Bath. (That, by the way, was the correct style then — like the continental clergy called Don Pacifico or Dom Pedro still today — in England, “Sir” died out, although I have had it on an envelope!) But dealing with the Church is not an as-you-like-it matter: good relations for the future, and common courtesy as befits England’s premier patriotic society, require measure-for-measure precision, since the last thing you want while seeking to honour Christ and his Saints is a tempest.....all much-ado-about-nothing in a way, perhaps, you may say? Christian names all round might be simpler? Well, yes: but until the times do alter, proprieties remain what they are, and they are worth mastering.

I have been called many things in my time, some of them not repeatable in a polite journal like this. Even if you know your clergyman well, and call him “John”, one still needs to get the form of address right for the formal menus, orders of service and speeches, etc., inseparable from doing things properly. Nothing annoys people more (who know what should happen) when it doesn’t. Clergy get used to it, but informed lay people are sometimes less tolerant. An example is the solecism “Reverend Smith will now speak”....no one would try to introduce “Right Honourable Blair,” would they? So, in short, remember that “The Reverend” is not a noun, and is not a title — the High Court decided that anybody could be called “Reverend” and that it was merely an honorific which the learned Judge could not imagine any clergyman wishing to use of himself.....

While we clergy do try to smile on sweetly whatever we are called (I’ve been called “Your Reverence”, “the Reverent”, and even “My Lord” — by a Police Officer, too, and so how could I put him right?) the correct form of address is easy to learn. On the envelope, “The Reverend or the Rev’d or the Revd. John Smith, M.A.”, or whatever he is: in the letter, “Dear Mr. Smith” or these days “Dear Miss Jones” and in speech whether to him or about him, the same style — Mr., Mrs., Dr., Canon, Prebendary or whatever other style is his. If he is a clergyman of the Church of England, you may refer to him as the Rector of Ambridge, the Vicar of Toddlewick or the Dean of Barchester. (It is a solecism to describe him as the Dean of Barchester Cathedral, although he is that, functionally; but it is not his title.) Some clergy prefer to be “Father”, like Roman Catholics.

Ministers and clergy of other denominations do not have territorial

designations as of right, because they have no legal jurisdiction as such; but it is only customary and polite to refer to the Minister of Pelham Street Baptist or the Bishop of the (Roman Catholic) (Diocese of) Penkrigde, or whatever. By the way, all clergy are ministers, but not all ministers are clergy. For Church of England clergy the correct envelope style is “The Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable the Lord Archbishop of.....” and for a Bishop “The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of.....” (the Bishop of London is also Rt. Honourable); The Very Reverend the Dean of Barchester; The Venerable the Archdeacon of Slimbridge; The Reverend Canon or Prebendary and/or Dr. Henry Jones.....and when required to be formal, in written or spoken form, (Dear) Mr. Dean, Mr. Archdeacon, Mr. Chancellor, and, of course, Lord Bishop. Less formally, in speech or writing, you may correctly these days simply say “Vicar, Rector, Dean, Archdeacon, Bishop, Canon” as the case may be. Although “Bishop Jim” has become oddly popular as a manner of speaking, “Archdeacon Bert” is less common, and “Dean Gary” even less, while “Vicar John” sounds a little less odd than “Rector Smith”. You are safe in saying Mr. or Dr., safe in saying Bishop or Archdeacon, but never safe in saying Reverend.... Leave the full form of address to the envelope —and to the Toastmaster!

If you belong to a society, institution or organisation which is arranging a church service, respect the proprieties when a clergyman has given permission for a service in his church. He has the jurisdiction. He decides who preaches. In a cathedral church, write to the Dean — not the Bishop of the diocese. In practice you may be negotiating with the member of the chapter, the canon, who is actually “in residence” for the period in question. He may or may not hold a cathedral office such as Precentor, Chancellor, Treasurer or Custos, Vice-Dean or whatever. An invitation, agreed with your society no doubt comes best from the responsible clergyman, and certainly must not be issued without his sanction.

Money! Remember that the destination of the collection is in law the joint decision of the incumbent and Parochial Church Council. Any special object for money given in church to go to ought to be carefully agreed before the service. Even though it is “your” service, the churchwardens remain responsible for deciding on the seating, and only parishioners have a legal right to be seated. In practice, if your service is on a Sunday, in particular, you will probably be asked to provide stewards to help the churchwardens and sidesmen, and are likely to be allocated by negotiation appropriate seating.

While the Rector or Vicar will greet and conduct the Lord Mayor, High Sheriff etc., it may well be thought appropriate for a prominent office-holder of your society to be associated with this — all worked out beforehand, of course.

Video and photography in general needs the permission of the responsible clergyman. Part of the reason for this where a video is concerned is that the Copyright and Performing Rights legislation applies, and a fee is likely to be required, quite properly, particularly by musicians — a notoriously underpaid profession.

The Reverend John W. Masding, M.A., LL.M., F.R.S.A., is Chairman of the English Clergy Association

After a Rainstorm on the Yorkshire Wolds

Grey is the sky, and broods with semblance grim
Across the rain soaked corn and sodden clay;
No sunshine sweeps across the valley side,
Nor does one beam upon the hill top play.
Silent and sombre is the cheerless scene,
Yet in its stillness, blessed and serene.

Beyond the world, far off, the western sky
Glow faintly, and with it in concert glows
The sense that gentle sadness does not chill
But sets each fretful feeling in repose.
Thus Earth, though cheerless, still has power to cheer
And soothe the mind that feels its beauty near.

And in the midst is raised a village spire —
Raised to affirm that Beauty is divine,
And though that steeple mingle with the dust,
Earth burn or freeze, that Beauty still shall shine
In God, its Author, and the minds He wrought
To share His love, His feeling and His thought.

These verses were written by the Rev'd David Scott, a late former Editor, in 1946 and published in 1992.

IN ALL THINGS LAWFUL AND HONEST

*Alex Quibbler, Parson & Parish's legal agony uncle,
responds to some recent questions arising in parish life*

QUESTION: I am a parish priest and in the parish there's a large secondary school — previously failing but now recently granted voluntary-aided (Church of England) status. The school is not licensed by the bishop for the celebration of the Eucharist, nor has any minister been licensed to conduct services in the school. The headteacher, however, claims that, on the basis of advice from the diocesan director of education, it is a matter for the school's governing body to appoint a team of "chaplains" (one for each year-group in the school) and that the school has nothing to do with the cure of souls of the parish. Please, do I have any rights in this?

Until such time as the bishop licenses a person to minister according to the rites of the Church of England (which he may do under the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967) then the principle remains that no cleric in the Church of England has any authority, without your permission, to exercise his or her ministry in the ecclesiastical parish of your cure: Canon C8(4). It is certainly not for the school's governing body to initiate "chaplancies" — and, as far as the Church of England is concerned, any minister accepting such an invitation would be in breach of canon law.

QUESTION: This may be rather an unusual point, but some years ago I bought, personally, the parsonage house in which I had been living as incumbent. This resulted in my being made priest-in-charge, although I have since been re-instated as Vicar. My question is about the status of the parsonage house and who actually determines it. The Inland Revenue claims that the relevant body is, and can only be, the Church Commissioners, but my bishop has issued a licence saying that I may live in this house and that it be treated as the parsonage house for the benefice, in the absence of a vicarage. Who designates a property as the parsonage house?

As I'm sure you know, the general position is that beneficed priests must live in the house of residence belong to the benefice for at least nine months a year. Where there isn't a house (or not a suitable one), then the diocesan bishop may license the incumbent to reside in "some fit and convenient house, although not belonging to that benefice" (Canon C25). But this is

not an official designation of such a property as the parsonage house; the bishop's licence is what it says — a licence to live in a suitable house (either because the parsonage is unsuitable or because there isn't one at all). Your bishop's licence, if your question accurately reflects its wording, is for your present house to be "treated as the parsonage"; which is not the same thing as being the official residence of the incumbent belonging to the property of the benefice and held in trust for the benefit of your successors. As to the procedure for acquiring a new parsonage house, then this does involve the Church Commissioners; just as at disposal of a parsonage, their consent — among others — is needed, so the Revenue is partly right. Yet I'm not aware of the Commissioners having a power to designate a property as the parsonage. Their consent, at both acquisition or disposal is vital, but the diocesan parsonage board, patron and incumbent also have rights, too.

QUESTION: We've got a large vicarage, parts of which go back to the eighteenth century. For a good number of years now part of the vicarage has been used as a "parish room" – used by the PCC, groups on study days, and so forth. Because it's part of the vicarage, those using the room have also had to use the vicarage's lavatories, so to make this facility more advantageous and self-contained we're planning a scheme for the building of a WC in part of a courtyard of the vicarage, accessed by this parish room. It's here that we've run into bit of a problem, because, with the PCC, I've applied for the diocesan parsonage's board consent for these modest improvements, but the diocesan office has responded by saying that the diocesan board of finance would be prepared to offer a lease to the PCC. This has really stumped me; I thought as Vicar with the freehold, the entire property was vested in me, and the last thing I want is for the diocese to get its hands on the place. Can you help?

This is an interesting one. You're quite right, of course, when you say that legally the entire parsonage — indeed the whole benefice property — vests in you as incumbent. What, I suspect, is happening is that the diocese is treating the parish room as if there's been a separate division of the property — after all, you call it a "parish" room. Now I don't know the circumstances and the history beyond what you've outlined, but the fact that the PCC was involved in making the request for the improvements may show that there has been some sort of division, even if not in a formalised way. Otherwise, why was the PCC party to that request at all? On the other hand, it may be that you have, in effect, granted a bare licence — a permission — for the PCC and others to use the room, and this could be something which your successor could change at his or her whim. The room might end up as a

granny flat, for all we know. And if anyone is thinking of granting a lease of part of the parsonage, then great care will be needed; as incumbent, with a duty to reside there (see the previous question), such a lease could end up being null and void, and certainly outside the protection of the Rent Acts.

Readers are invited to continue sending in their questions about parish law and practice to the Quibbler in forthcoming issues of the magazine. All names and addresses are, of course, withheld. Whilst every effort is made by Alex to ensure the accuracy of his responses, advice should be taken before action is implemented or refrained from in specific cases.

(On a personal note, Alex is concerned at unsubstantiated rumours circulating that he was to be included in the recent New Year's Honours List. While he has privately admitted that he has always rather relished the thought of "Sir Alex and Lady Quibbler," he remains plain "Mr" — Ed.)

Have you visited the ECA's new website?

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contains details of the Association's news and events,
our work among churchwardens and patrons,
our charitable help to clergy through holiday grants,
and the latest *Parson & Parish*

BOOK REVIEWS

Collected Thoughts

The Radio 4 “Thought for the Day” Broadcasts

Eric James

Continuum, AD 2002

ISBN 0 82646 400 9, Paperback, 139pp

“Thought for the Day” on Radio 4’s Today Programme is a national institution. Like all such institutions, it has its supporters and its detractors. I count myself amongst its supporters — if it is done well. One of those who does it best is Eric James, whose “Collected Thoughts” were published last year.

The “thoughts” collected in this book were broadcast between 1992–2002 and cover a wide range of subjects from S Africa to cancer, from Ivor Novello to Edvard Munch. Many of them arise out of his work as Gray’s Inn “Preacher” and Director of (the now defunct) Christian Action. Herein lie both its strength and its weakness. It *is* interesting to know what an eminent cleric or high–court judge said to him recently over tea because he *makes it* interesting. At times, however, this comes perilously close to name–dropping and therefore somewhat irritating, as is the picture of him on the front cover of the book, resplendent in the red cassock of a Chaplain to the Queen.

This is a shame, because it might obscure his real strength which is in his ability to get alongside you as a friend at that time in the morning and, gently and in an unforced way, cast light on everyday tasks or world events that otherwise might pass you by. Interestingly, nothing in this collection matches his TV “epilogue” broadcast the evening after the death of Marilyn Monroe, 30 years earlier, the transcript of which appears in the preface. Quoting Marilyn’s words: “I never quite understand it —this sex symbol — it becomes a thing. I just hate to be a thing”, James asks, “Who killed Marilyn? I don’t know... I think every time we treat a person as a thing we are helping to build the world that killed Marilyn... God created people to be treated as people, not as things.” I believe this thought to be as relevant today as 40 years ago.

The Rev’d Hugh Wright, Vicar of Oakfield, Ryde

**Common Worship Considered
A Liturgical Journey Examined**

Peter Toon

Edgeways Books, AD 2003

ISBN 0 90783 978 9, Paperback, 160pp. £16.80

As the Incumbent of one of the parishes asked to try out some of the early drafts for *Common Worship*, I was interested to know what conclusion Dr Toon would draw from the finished and ongoing process. As the co-author of a previous book, *Neither Archaic Nor Obsolete*, in which he defends the *Book of Common Prayer* against the charge of being outdated and irrelevant to the challenges the Church faces today, and vigorously champions its worth against modern alternatives, I was prepared for some trenchant criticism. I was not disappointed.

He begins by comparing the prefaces of the *Book of Common Prayer* with the preface to *Common Worship*. Whereas the aims of the *Book of Common Prayer* are clear, he finds the aspirations of *Common Worship* vague and grandiose. Indeed, he prefers the 1980 Book, which he claims has “greater coherence of content and argument”, and, “makes humbler claims about what it is and can achieve.”

The declared aim of *Common Worship* is to provide “texts, contemporary as well as traditional, which are resonant and memorable.” But are the new texts likely to succeed? Such a wide range of choice — some would say a bewildering range — is likely to act against this. As a parish, we found the number of Eucharistic Prayers we were asked to consider, excessive. Liturgy needs time to settle. Constant changing is not helpful. Language that begins by sounding exciting and innovative can soon sound merely clever, then trite and finally irritating. Dr Toon has no doubt that we already have demonstrably memorable texts in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Quoting from the *Common Worship* Preface, “It is when the framework of worship is clear and familiar and the texts are known by heart that the poetry of praise and the passion of prayer can transcend the printed word,” he applauds this but believes it really applies to the *Book of Common Prayer* which by God’s grace has and can continue to produce such transcendence.

Dr Toon is unhappy about the use of the word “common” when applied to *Common Worship*. Is it, he wonders, a way of giving the new rites some cloak of respectability, of claiming for them some continuity with the past that isn’t real. The new book is “not the Book of Common Worship but Common Worship, available in a variety of forms, printed and digital and open-ended.”

The greater part of his book is concerned with examining some of the texts on offer. He seeks to see how these measure up to the standard required of Christian worship, which he defines as “the consecration and use of all our faculties to the glory of the Holy Trinity and in his service. It is the joyous abasement of the people of God before the Divine Mystery, who is the Triune God.” While accepting the concept of the journey as a legitimate metaphor for worship, reflecting as it does the journey in both the Old and the New Testament, he believes that *Common Worship* relies too heavily on this at the expense of other biblical models which are ignored.

While not denying the importance of other models, in my own experience, I found that in the Baptism service, in particular, the journey is a very useful picture. For how often have priest and people felt we are failing those who are not regular members of the congregation who bring infants to Baptism, by not stressing sufficiently clearly that this is a beginning and not the end of the matter? By not having the service either huddled round the font at the back or using a bowl at the chancel steps but using the whole of the Church it is possible to demonstrate physically that being a child of God has indeed life-giving as well as life-long consequences. While it is perfectly possible to do this without having a new rite, nevertheless a new approach can stimulate our thoughts. Dr Toon does not rule out the need for supplementary forms of worship that cater for modern situations not envisaged by the *Book of Common Prayer*. He realises too that most parishes will seek to live in both worlds, that of Common Prayer and “Common Worship.”

Whether or not we agree with all of Dr Toon’s judgements and conclusions, this is a challenging book for all who are concerned with the leading of public worship and for those who believe that we have a responsibility to aim for the highest standards in the worship of Almighty God. His people should be offered nothing less.

The Rev’d Charles Stallard, having served in the dioceses of Birmingham and Worcester, is now retired and lives in Aberystwyth.

CHAIRPIECE

A frightening glimpse of the future....

Love bytes, according to *The Times*, could herald a threat to intimacy in this computer age. Computers are useful to increasing numbers of clergy and laity, but is there a threat, too?

Imagine.

It is 8 p.m. on Sunday night in the vestry. The two churchwardens sit glumly in front of The Terminal. Tonight's input to the diocesan tribunal is required. The collections are all bagged up ready for the diocesan bank account in the morning — the new system maximizes the benefits accruing from what would otherwise be numerous small balances in current accounts, and earns interest for the diocese to help with the quota — up 40% next year, rumour says. The churchwardens feel weak at the knees, even though they are sitting down, before the one-eyed monster that increasingly rules the parishes.

Bert turns to Sid. "Do you think we could up the Evensong figures, you know, just a bit?" He is hesitant, and sounds it. After all, St. Aethelthruethnoth's got caught doing that two months ago, when someone from the diocesan inspectorate was in church, all-unbeknown. There are not many churches with an Evensong — and not many with two men as churchwardens — and scope for manipulating anything is horribly limited. The vicar thinks that is as it should be. She's been with them six months, now, not really "Vicar", although they still call her that out of habit, but priest-in-charge. She'll move on, in any event. But Bert and Sid won't. They're the Old School, she teases them. They don't mind. They know. They're going nowhere. There's nowhere to go to, not with the Prayer Book.

"If we had agreed to *Services for Humanity*," Sid says, "we wouldn't need to try anything on. You get bonus points if you go humanitarian, don't you, after the Synod decided *Common Worship* was elitist, sexist and every other -ist you can imagine, and the Bishop has put our diocese top-of-the-range for going over completely. It does make a church a lot less likely to be closed.....but the folk don't like all that Mother God stuff round here. Fair lot just walked out of Mavis' funeral last week, you know, when she tried it."

Glumly the two churchwardens, we can imagine, fill in the on-screen weekly returns. There's the money — easy enough: not enough, but there you are — can't bank what hasn't come in. Diocese hasn't managed to get the trust income yet, but there's a similar case up with the Supreme Court that might

go against parishes' rights to retain anything. Then, on top of the money, there's the numbers — the section they're on now. The temptation passes. Bert and Sid are decent men. They put down the truthful figures. 22 is better than last week, anyhow. Mind, if the Board of Finance doesn't pay for a new boiler before winter, they're going to have a very thin time of it over Christmas, and the cold months ahead. Gets the numbers down — diocese can't afford boilers, they hear; it's all portable heaters this year — but who gets the money when a church is shut and sold?

Last year it was hundreds of churches sold off all over England — “Sale of the Century” that English Clergy Association Chairman had written, years ago, in *Parson & Parish*. They were glad they'd been to St. Giles-in-the-Fields for the AGM. — that Senator Alex Quibbler had been real good. House of Cronies was a good loss, they reckoned — and the Archcrone, as they called her — and the new Senate had the Archbishops, still, and the Bishop of London (elected by the other bishops) and two elected clergy, sitting with the mullahs and imams, and all the other leaders of faith constituencies — and the pop stars, footballers, media celebrities and the like. The Houses of Parliament at Midminster were crowded out for office space (oh, yes, Westminster had been judged offensive terminology for Eastern peoples) and Senator Quibbler shared his office space with a stripper — they hadn't liked to ask of what orientation. It was the computer-voting system that had made it all so easy. Just press the button, and Bob's your uncle — you've elected a Senate.

Computers ruled everything. The vicar didn't like it that her job didn't rank as priority user, and so she could use the car only on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sunday was legal, too, but she didn't want it then. The 'bus that took the musicians round the parishes of the Benefice — well, Group it was, now — took her as well. Hard world, now. Computers controlled everything — almost what you thought.

Look at this next section in tonight's entries. Ethnic mix, age range, all the different sexual orientations — you had to keep near the national “norm” for all these things, or your church lost points for being aberrational and elitist. It had been useful when they'd had that family of asylum seekers in the hall basement kitchen rooms — they were so grateful for food and warmth, and a bit of real Christian love — that they came to church and helped to get the points actually into positive territory! And he was a plumber.....couldn't get a plumber anywhere now, not with 85% of kids going to university. Talk about massaging figures — all that did was keep the jobless totals down. A degree in Green Studies was not much good when what you wanted was a leak fixing — it wasn't green to waste so much water, no, they'd been told that; but the insurance didn't allow them

to do the job themselves, as churchwardens had in the Good Old Days, when we still had AD and BC.

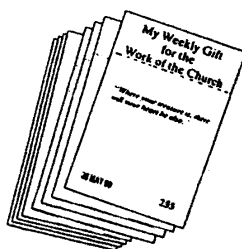
Next section: content in today's sermons and presentations. Boxes to highlight for every political correctness under the sun. Vicar was good at this — better than her predecessor, poor Mr. Hooper — he was always scoring things up wrong for them, mentioning *men* instead of *persons* and all the elementary things forbidden under the Sensitivities Act, and the poor old bishop had no choice, as the law now was, but to terminate his employment contract and send him to the voluntary re-education centre before he went and got himself arrested and was in a worse jam. Bishop himself made a mistake at the annual diocesan Confirmation, though — got proper carried away by having 34 to confirm — and in the blessing went and said *Holy* instead of *Spirit of the Age*. *Parent* and *Child* he'd said all right — he'd remembered — only compulsory since last year, anyhow — but, well, after they'd upped the retiring age years back you couldn't be too surprised — he was 77, after all.....

Then I awoke, and knew it was a dream.

J.W.M.

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