

After that, however, the going gets rough until we fight through to another batch of psalm portions (19-29), and St Francis gets preferential treatment at Hymn 30, probably on the same basis as that used for Hymn 10. However, I do not propose to analyse the whole of the rest of the hymnary with similar minuteness: the point is that the compilers on the whole appear to regard Amens as an intrusion, while I per contra condemn their exclusion.

Now at the very end of all this (I can imagine many a weary reader pricking up hopeful ears for an imminent Amen), I should like to leave the thinking public with a stimulating question, to which I have as yet been unable to devise an answer. I wrote a few paragraphs back that the surgical excision of Amens from hymns should not be blamed solely upon the musical experts involved in the compilation of CH3; I said that I could trace this melancholy malpractice somewhat further back. But - and here indeed is the great unsolved problem - WHO in fact was the mighty authority who first issued the implacable ukase that Amens must be cast into outer darkness? The swift and almost universal obedience accorded to his fiat suggests that somewhere out there - presumably on earth rather than in outer space, but can one be sure? - beyond Edinburgh, beyond Canterbury, beyond even Rome, there has recently emerged a kind of new HE WHO MUST BE OBEYED (I do hope not a SHE), potent enough to stop us in our tracks anywhere. Could it be a super-Ayatollah?

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A N O R D E R F O R T H E
D E C O N S E C R A T I O N O F C H U R C H
P R O P E R T Y

The Revd W Gerald Jones, MA BD MTh.

(Kirkmichael with Straiton)

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INTRODUCTION

Though a tragic commentary on our society, the fate of redundant churches is sealed increasingly by their conversion to a purpose far removed from their original intention, or by the merciless hammer of the demolition contractor. It is unlikely that during the interregnum between death sentence and execution there has been any significant act of worship which expresses the sentiments of "deconsecration" of hallowed property.

Furthermore, the ancient concept of the churchyard is also eroding, as more and more consecrated ground is acquired for motorway construction, private development or parking.

facilities: yet again, it is unlikely that the "consecrated" becomes "desecrated" without any final word of parting and prayer.

This brief Order for the Deconsecration of Church Property may act as the basis of a final service within a church building, or as a framework on other occasions when consecrated soil is transferred from the sacred to the secular.

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ORDER FOR THE DECONSECRATION OF CHURCH PROPERTY

1. SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away;
blessed be the name of the Lord. (*Job 1:21*) [NEB]

In God's hands are the souls of all that live,
the spirit of all human kind.
Wisdom and might are his,
with him are firmness and understanding.
If he pulls down, there is no rebuilding;
if he imprisons, there is no release. (*Job 12:10-14*) [NEB]

For everything there is a season, and a time
for every matter under heaven:
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away. (*Eccles 3:1-6, selected*)
[NEB]

Jesus said:
"Heaven and earth will pass away; my words will never pass
away." (*Matt 24:35*) [NEB]

2. PREAMBLE

Beloved in the Lord:
In a former age, our forefathers set apart this site from common use,
and consecrated it to the glory of God the Father, who has called us
by his grace; to the glory of God the Son, who loves us and gave
himself for us; and to the glory of God the Holy Spirit, who
sanctifies, guides and comforts us.

With changing circumstances in passing years, this property no longer
fulfils its primary purpose. We meet, therefore, to thank Almighty
God for the years of service it has provided, and to ask his blessing

as it passes from a status sacred to secular.

Let us pray.

Lord God Almighty,
before whom time flows as an ever-rolling stream:
we acknowledge that in this world of change
even sacred sites outlive their use and generation.

We think of churches no longer viable,
of churchyards no longer functional,
of manses no longer economical
and of other properties no longer usable.

Be with us now, we pray,
as we deconsecrate this holy place;
that its spiritual significance ceases with dignity
and its function is transformed decently and in order;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

4. LESSON(s)

*There may be read a short passage from Holy Scripture,
such as:*

*Psalm 46, with its reassurance that, come what may, God
remains our refuge and strength,*

OR

Luke 21:5ff wherein the destruction of the Temple is foretold.
[This passage is especially appropriate for the deconsecration of a church.
Though in their immediate context, these verses foretell the devastation
of the Temple in Jerusalem, they nevertheless warn us that no matter how
aesthetically pleasing and ornate a consecrated building might be, the day
will come when "all will be thrown down".]

5. ACT OF DECONSECRATION

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: we now
dissolve the sacred status of this property, and declare it free from the
worship and service of Almighty God: to whom be glory and majesty, dominion
and power, now and for ever. AMEN.

6. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us pray.

Almighty God,
by whose grace our forefathers set apart this soil from a common to a
holy use:
we give thanks for all who first laid out this place,

(cont'd p. 15)

On the whole I judge this to be a mischievous development. It should be opposed a) because it entails a deliberate rejection of assured biblical study results;

b) because the people, though not necessarily conversant with the details of such study, should not be hoodwinked into believing that nothing is going on, and that nothing needs liturgical adjustment in the light of it; and c) because, though it is not necessary to accept uncritically Niesel's bleak rejection of liturgical interest and development, it can hardly be proper to promote it in a direction that flies in the face of assured modern scholarship.

No doubt readers of the Record will have observations to make on these suggested judgments. They will be welcome !

(Agreed - Ed.)

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Order for Deconsecration (Cont'd from p³⁰)

6. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us pray.

Almighty God,

by whose grace our forefathers set apart this soil from a common
to a holy use:

we give thanks for all who first laid out this place,
who cared for it with love
and left their names inscribed for ever upon its peace and beauty.

Grant, Lord God,

that as we have declared the end of its special status,
our thoughts do not linger here but reach out to a sinful world
with renewed strength and hope,
till every knee bows down before you
and every tongue confesses Christ as Saviour and Lord;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for evermore. AMEN.

7. LORD'S PRAYER

8. THE BENEDICTION

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. AMEN.

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