

FROM
THE NEW VICE - PRESIDENT

The Revd Dr Bryan Spinks

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I have been asked to write a few paragraphs introducing myself to The Church Service Society members, since an Anglican Vice-President who hitherto has never been north of the border (though my paternal grandfather was born in Inverness) is not only an unknown face, but is also an unknown commodity.

My interest in academic liturgy began as an undergraduate at Durham University when I had the opportunity to study liturgy under Canon Arthur Couratin, an Anglo-Catholic who was recognised as one of The Church of England's leading liturgists. He preferred to teach the early and classical texts, but two other undergraduates and I persuaded him to teach us Reformation texts for our Finals papers, which he reluctantly did (he called us "little bastards"). This together with an increasing interest in Calvin and Barth imbued from Charles Cranfield, paved the way for my later research work on the Eucharist in the English Reformed traditions. However, Couratin insisted that I also study his beloved early and classical texts, and simultaneously I developed an interest in Syriac liturgy and had some tuition in Syriac with Professor Sebastian Brock. I have specialised in East Syrian or Nestorian liturgy, though my interests in the Maronite rite took me to Lebanon as guest of the Maronite Patriarch in 1987.

Since 1982 I have been a part-time lecturer in liturgy for the Divinity Faculty of the University of Cambridge, and since 1986 have been a member of The Church of England Liturgical Commission. My more mischievous friends allege that my function on the Commission is to check the Anglican evangelical Zwinglians with pure Calvin and Knox !

I was utterly amazed and delighted when The Church Service Society

wrote to me to inform me that I had been elected Vice-President, a post which I gladly accept. I was grateful when Society editors accepted some early articles of mine for publication in "Liturgical Review". I look forward to delivering a lecture for The Society in Edinburgh and Aberdeen in 1992.

From my own studies on liturgy of the Reformed tradition, I am convinced of two things.

First, the Geneva-Scottish Reformed tradition has a very rich sacramental theology which it has rarely if ever properly exploited liturgically (though the Eucharist in the 1940 BCO, if used as printed, is far superior to any Anglican rite in existence at that time). Secondly, this Reformed tradition is ideally placed to make a significant contribution to liturgical theology and liturgical study, rather than leaving it to Roman Catholic and Anglican scholars. However, hitherto it has not made this contribution - certainly not in recent decades. At present most facilities for graduate studies in liturgy are in Roman Catholic institutions abroad, secured by the demands of the Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. An exception is the UK where financial problems have prevented the setting up of a Catholic Institute of Liturgy.

Other Churches seem to rely on self-taught liturgists, and those who are regarded by their brethren as having an eccentric interest in 'that sort of thing'. This is a disgraceful situation. As Barth reminded us, it is worship which calls forth the church into visible fellowship, and it is through worship and not "Assembly Reports" that most folk learn their theology. It is crucial therefore that worship is not just a practical discipline, but also a serious theological discipline in its own right. The Church of England is guilty in this respect. Although there were once university lectureships in liturgy, and even a Chair, today there is no full-time university post in liturgy in any English University.

Scotland is in a similar state. Dare I perhaps challenge the Kirk to remedy this situation, and not to follow the complacency of the English? Funds from a closed college have been used to found and fund a lectureship at Glasgow University.

Is it not possible to do the same for liturgy, so that Scottish

graduate theologians can undertake serious research in liturgy ? Then the Geneva-Scottish Reformed tradition can begin to make a proper contribution to this important discipline.

Can I also remind readers that Church of Scotland participation in the Society for Liturgical Study would be welcomed.

Biographical Note

Bryan Spinks (b.1948) is married with five children. He gained his B.A. in Hons. Theology at Durham, and a post-graduate Diploma in Theology with Distinction (1970 and 1971); M.Th. (London,1972); B.D. (Durham,1979); D.D. (Durham,1988).

He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He was ordained priest in 1976, and since 1980 has been chaplain at Churchill College, Cambridge, a post which he combines with full-time school teaching, and part-time university lecturing.

His main publications are:

Freedom or Order ?

The eucharistic liturgy in English Congregationalism,1645-1980.
Pittsburgh Theological Monographs 8, Pennsylvania, 1984.
(Chapter on Westminster Directory)

From the Lord, and the Best Reformed Churches.

A study of the eucharistic liturgy in the English and
Separatist traditions,1550-1633.
Rome, 1985.
(Chapter on Calvin and Knox)

Christ our Light

Prayers,Responses and Music for Morning and Evening Prayer.
Mayhew Ltd., 1990.

The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer

Cambridge University Press, 1991.

(A study from its Old Testament setting, through the Jewish liturgical uses, through the early and classical anaphoras, Reformation treatment, through to the present, with theological reflection.

Substantial discussion of Presbyterian rites.

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