

A Letter from one of your Proctors

The Vicarage,
Roydon, HARLOW.
July 9th 1974

Sam Lawrence Daughters!!

Dear Brother,

"The Great Synod of York, 1974"

I came home yesterday from this historic occasion - the meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England at which we repeated, in a new context, the opening Declaration of Magna Carta - "Ecclesia Anglicana libera sit" - "The Church of England shall be free" - free to choose her own spiritual leaders, her Bishops, who, for well over a hundred years have been appointed by the Prime Minister of the day, with the help of a Civil Servant. Before that time also, she was a "church in chains" from another quarter! By 270 votes to 70, the Synod passed this Resolution:

"That the General Synod affirms the principle that the decisive voice in the appointment of diocesan bishops should be that of the Church".

Ever since November 1960, when I put forward a motion for the reform of the method of appointing bishops, by means of a committee of enquiry of members of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the then Church Assembly, (it was carried by a large majority, and I was asked to serve on it, but it was blocked by higher powers, and never allowed to meet!), I have, as you know, made this matter one of my chief concerns, believing that this scandal of being at the mercy of secular bumbledom in the field of the Apostolic Succession was a running sore in our Church. You have consistently elected me as your proctor on this ticket, and on that of Baptismal Reform, and I express my appreciation of your support. By a happy coincidence, the Synod also sent down for consideration by the dioceses the matter of a Service of Infant Blessing, - an outcome of the Christian Doctrine Commission's Report, "Baptism, Thanksgiving and Blessing" (obtainable, bound up with the Ely Commission's Christian Initiation Report, for 60p, p & p 20p, from Church House Bookshop, Dean's Yard, S.W.1.). I was asked to give evidence before the Commission, and will gladly send you their findings, and copies of the Orders of Presentation, and of an Infant Catechumenate, which I brought before them.

I am enclosing reprints of items from one of last year's sessions of the General Synod. That on the appointment of bishops is fair enough, but I was sorry my "Top of the Tots" Nursery Rhyme on Sir John Hewitt, the Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary, (he was seconded from H.M. Customs to choose bishops!) was not immortalised. It was an attempt to blow the gaff on "consultation with the Church", which has hoodwinked the Church for so long. Here it is:

"Little Jack Hewitt had the answer (he knew it!) to the Church's Episcopal Pia:
The "consulting" all done, Home he would run, stick in his Thumb, Pull out a Plum,
And say, "What a Good Boy am I!"

Hewitt has now resigned. Peace be upon him, and upon the Israel of God.

The other excerpt deals with Payment of the Clergy. You and I may be able to manage: but young men now entering the ministry very soon find that the financial pressures are acute, more especially now that it is illegal to earn extra by hospital chaplaincies, educational appointments, etc. I suppose clergy are the only Britons whose terms of employment exclude the possibility of trying to make ends meet by extra work in one's own time. One in five of those ordained in the past five years have left the pastoral ministry. Uncertain 'job specification' may be one cause, but I am sure financial stringency is another. I was elected to the Diocesan Finance Committee on this specific ticket, and I have presented to the Diocesan Synod a Memorandum on "CLERIFUND (CHELMSFORD)", a copy of which I will gladly send on request. It seeks to establish a voluntary fund, which will augment the basis stipend from year to year, i.e. all moneys received will be distributed and the dead hand of endowment obviated. Its motto could be, "the living agent paid by the Living Church". I understand it will come before the Diocesan Synod in October, perhaps with the title changed to "Bishop's Ministry Fund". But is this an improvement? I would welcome your observations on this point! "Oxfam" owes much of its success to its title!

Sing unto the Lord a New Song! Give your congregation a real treat! Let them sing the Good News by means of New Testament Psalms! The Psalter has not been produced commercially, and as long as ends meet I am content! I will gladly send you a complimentary copy of the Psalter (hardback, gilt lettering, printed by C.U.P.), and also of a Family Service

based on Series 2 Morning and Evening Prayer, with 16 canticles. The congregational copies of Psalter and Service are all pointed, which helps the congregation to join in. There is now a Music Edition of the Psalter, with a chant for each psalm on the same or facing page, together with the 16 canticles, 40p. but a free copy on request! Revive Evensong, and revivify your Family Service! (Something for postage would be welcome!)

If you use Series 3 Holy Communion, and find the music difficult for the congregation, why not sing the Gloria to a chant, (Mornington in D, or Robinson in E Flat). It makes a nice Canticle, in 7 verses. Like this:-

1. Glory to / God . in the / highest:
and / peace . to His / people . on / earth.
2. Lord God, / heavenly / King:
al-/mighty / God and /Father.
- 2nd Part 3. We worship You, we / give You / thanks:
we / praise You / for Your / glory.
4. Lord Jesus Christ, only / Son . of the / Father:
Lord / God, - / Lamb of / God,
5. You take away the sins of the world,* have / mercy / on us:
You are seated at the right hand of the / Father,* re-/ceive our / prayer
6. For You alone are the Holy One,* You al-/one are the / Lord:
You al-/one - / are the . Most / High,
7. Jesus Christ, with the / Holy / Spirit:
in the glory of God the / Father./ A-/men.

I would remind you that the new Worship and Doctrine Measure provides for experiment within a new service, and well as with a new service. If, for instance, at the parish level, "Thee" and "Thou" were found to be, on balance, better than "You" and "Your", etc., this is more likely to be incorporated in our new services than "liturgy from the Top". So, do experiment, and let your proctors know the results!

A final word about the controversial W.C.C. grants, (whose "Special Fund" it now emerges, if fed from the General Fund). It was because I felt the the W.C.C. seems bent on taking Christ from the side of the big battalions, and dumping Him in the camp of the terrorists, that I moved that £1,000 be "chopped off" their General Synod grant of £17,400. I have never, in 23 years, known a financial amendment to the Budget to be accepted before! (As this was). You can't do Christ's work with the Devil's weapons, and I have a motion on the General Synod Agenda, affirming the incompatibility of the Christian Faith both with oppression and exploitation, and also with "terrorism and killing as remedies for the same", and pledging increasing help for oppressed peoples by every "clearly Christian" means. Such as the South African Church Development Trust, which has parish projects, (building a school, roofing a church, training an African girl to be a nurse, or a teacher, etc. etc. Details from the Secretary, Dr. A.L. Spencer-Payne, 19 Woodbury Park Road, Tunbridge Wells.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Wansley