



Book Review

Phillip Tovey (ed.), *Anglican Baptismal Liturgies* (London: Canterbury/SCM Press, 2017), ISBN 978 1786220202, £60.00/\$81.00 (pbk).

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I must confess to two unusual angles from which I address this particular volume, over and above my friendly association with the editor over more than 30 years and my high respect for his scholarship and thoroughness.

First, there was Tovey's immediate predecessor, Peter Jagger, who edited *Christian Initiation 1552–1969* (SPCK, 1970). I reviewed this for the *Journal of Theological Studies* in October 1971 and gave it somewhat qualified approval, such as to provoke a protest from Peter Jagger – and 41 years went by before *JTS* asked me to review a volume again! So I vividly recall the Jagger book. Secondly, Tovey himself declares in his second sentence 'This volume ... stands as a companion to Colin Buchanan's *Anglican Eucharistic Liturgies 1985–2010*', and he later says that it 'approximately follows the order and some of the conventions of *Anglican Eucharistic Liturgies*'. I should add that the publishers have done a neat job of enabling Tovey's to look like that 'companion' to mine. And in the comparison Tovey points out that he too has done the rounds of the Anglican Communion, has picked up and reproduced the contemporary rites from as many provinces as possess their own orders, and has given each province a short historical introduction to its own texts.

The *genus* being duly noted, it may then be helpful to describe *Anglican Baptismal Liturgies* by its *differentia*. Tovey has had to let nearly half a century of liturgical experiment drop out of sight; there was no possibility of gazetteering all the rounds of revision in all the provinces, and so he has given 'a comprehensive snapshot of the Anglican Communion and its baptismal liturgies frozen at the date of 2016'. This was, however, a good point to stop the clock, as much of the Communion has since the 1990s settled down from experimentation and has returned (often with hard-back books) to settled official rites. However, baptismal rites usually fall, at least in their normative character, within eucharistic celebrations; they themselves provide for both adults and infants (separately or together); they relate in various ways to confirmation rites (which are often bracketed with them in a single title 'initiation'); the archetypes spawn various derivative rites; they may involve different pre-suppositions about original sin (let alone about the devil); they admit of various secondary ceremonies; they differ in the mode of baptism; and they are devised within different cultures, such that, whereas the concept of ideal discipleship embodied in the rites is fairly consistent, the expectations of parental faith may vary enormously and may be expressed in different ways liturgically. In this uncharted

landscape Tovey has had to steer a careful course not to omit anything crucial to each province's rites, but equally not to overload each chapter or print duplicate texts unnecessarily; and he has done this with skill and economy of space. There is a great resource here for any province creating or re-creating baptismal rites.

A major presenting issue is that Anglican history has no settled place for confirmation, and Anglican theology has consequently even less. The Reformers clearly viewed it as a non-sacramental pastoral rite at years of discretion after infant baptism; the 1662 Restorers of the Prayer Book built in a less explicable near-requirement of confirmation for those baptized in riper years; from 1892 in the USA Prayer Book revision led to the inclusion of the Acts 8 passage about the Samaritans as the 'proper' Scripture reading at confirmations (it is still listed in the possible readings for the 'confirmation-only' service as late as the Southern African 1989 Book, but readings are not shown in the relevant chapter here); but that Acts 8 usage particularly favoured wholly separate administrations of baptism and confirmation, and from the days of Gregory Dix onwards there has been a strong adherence to the notion that the two rites should come in one service (though still with separable theologies), and that makes for different readings. Many of the rites here are run-ons from the Dixian emphasis on putting both together; and it is hard for the more recent (but surely far more biblical?) axiom of 'sacramental initiation complete in baptism' to assert its ritual expression over against these run-on texts. The one province which has made a clear change to express the axiom is the Anglican Church of Canada, where the 1985 *Book of Alternative Services* does not require newly baptized adults to be confirmed, but rather brings them straight into communion. This is hard to discern from the actual texts, and Tovey has not drawn attention to it; and the somewhat romanticized onrush of anointing in the last three decades has generally given a picture of a complex ritual somewhat in contrast to the starkness of baptisms in the New Testament.

Tovey was himself a signatory of the 1991 Toronto Statement which promoted the axiom, and he gives space to it in his introductory essays (and also calls the Anglican-Baptist document, *Conversations around the World 2000–2005*, a document where the Baptists as well as the Anglicans apparently itched to make more of confirmation, as 'clumsy and muddled'). The inclusion in communion of baptized but unconfirmed children has taken many provinces in the right direction, and has pointed towards a right understanding of confirmation, but clarity is still far from us, as this overview of the texts discloses. Tovey gives good marks to the WCC 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* document (BEM), but in a descriptive way it too reports the muddle without correcting it.

I think it is fair to say that Tovey is understandably engaged in his introductory chapters with the nature of the texts and any overall trends he can discern in structure and content. The underlying theological questions inevitably take second place in his mind. But a reviewer may boldly say: in this baptismal field would that Anglicans lose their oil bottles, question their culture, and read their Bibles more closely.

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