

THE GREAT GROVE BOOKLET GAME

I hope that anyone interested in The Church Service Society would also have at least a passing interest in the Grove Booklet enterprises, for all that they come from South of the Border, and represent a possibly alien influence. I am glad to take the veil off the business and tell the inside story.

There is inevitably a personal factor in it. When I was training for Anglican ordination in 1959-61, I found myself to be a slightly unusual animal, in that I was both an evangelical in my own persuasion, and a sacramentalist and liturgically orientated person not just from perversity, but as actually related to my evangelicalism. In those days Anglican evangelicalism was just struggling free of a wholly defensive and even negative view in respect of liturgical change, and I was invited to join a group of younger Anglican evangelicals interested in liturgy and relating to the then newly-opened Evangelical Research Centre at Latimer House Oxford. That group remained a Latimer House group till 1976, and then declared its independence, and re-constituted itself as the 'Group for Renewal of Worship' (G-R-O-W). I meanwhile was invited in the Spring of 1964 to become a lecturer in liturgy at the (erstwhile) London College of Divinity - now St John's College, Nottingham - and a few weeks later to become a member of the Church of England Liturgical Commission. Both appointments ran for above twenty years, and both became important to the Grove Books' enterprises.

The Latimer House Liturgy Group concentrated in the 1960's on producing 'definitive' evangelical alternatives to the official Liturgical Commission productions, and two of these were duly published in hard back slim books, the second of them being The Holy Communion and its Revision (Marcham, 1972) by Roger Beckwith and John Tiller. However, in 1971 I succeeded as chairman of the Group, and put to them a plan for undefinitive fast-moving writings, in which each person would try out ideas on the Group, but would then write as he or she saw fit, and take responsibility for it himself or herself. The plan came to birth, helped by the commentary of a St John's colleague of mine, Julian Charley, on the Anglican-Roman

Catholic Statement on the Eucharist which launched the series of 'Grove Booklets on Ministry and Worship' on 31st December, 1971. I was used to doing some small-time publishing on the side, done in fact from the margin on retail book-selling from a theological bookshop I was running (with the goodwill of the Council) on the College premises. Anyway, when the series of booklets was due to come to birth, I hawked myself round various publishers with the venture, and eventually got the message to do it myself! Thus Grove Books (a title carefully chosen to indicate either bookselling or publishing or both) took on the series of 'Grove Booklets' - the standard product being 10,000 words long, 24 pages long, and coming out at monthly intervals.

Then it started to grow. Over ten years three other parallel groups came into being: for Ethics, Pastoral Ministry, and Spirituality. Each of these now produces a booklet once a quarter, and through their coming into existence the 'Ministry and Worship' series redefined its frontiers as 'Worship' only.

At the time I write Worship series no. 98 is going to the Printers, for January 1987, and these booklets, beginning at 20p per issue in 1971, have now reached the cost of a round pound. The booklets are fairly popular in style, and are both educational and practical in their outworking. Usually an author has talked over his material with his group for some time before writing a full script - and thus he (or she) not only has the benefit of much cross-fertilization when writing, but also only actually writes the full script when he already knows it will be published. Thus authors write in a context of mutual support and care, rather than having to do a full typescript first and then have it rejected by publishers later. Some of the Worship titles are very specifically 'C/E' and relate to the text of the "Alternative Service Book" of the Church of England, not just as theological commentaries but as pastoral handbooks. The Group also produced a glossy hardback job, Anglican Worship Today, which is an intelligent layman's guide to the ASB, with diagrams, pictures, and charts, and reasonably untechnical text - but in essence a library of Grove Booklets!

In 1975 the Group took on two more roles simultaneously. First of all, we launched a cheap monthly news sheet called News of Liturgy. This is built on concertina folding

principles and has eight pages. I have edited this from the start, and it begins its thirteenth year with issue no. 145. It includes all the C/E news I can muster (much of it from the horse's mouth), and some news from other denominations, and from Anglicans in other parts of the world. There are also book reviews, short articles, correspondence, and a measured dose of my own views on this and that. I try to keep the style light, but the factual content accurate. About 1200 copies per month go out - quite a few to those who take booklets on standing order; and quite a few also to diocesan liturgical committee members, and airmail customers in North America, Australia, and elsewhere. Kirk subscribers would be very welcome - each issue costs 20p in 1987 when sent with the booklets, or a separate postal subscription is £3.90 for the year. There is also a quarterly companion concertina called News of Hymnody, which also costs 20p per issue, and a combined sub is £4.50 for the year.

The other new departure in 1975 was to move into the more specialized field of monographs of a more technical sort. These have come out once a quarter for the whole of the twelve years, and are known as Grove Liturgical Studies. They have the same A5 format as the booklets but are 32 or more pages in length, and cost £2 in 1987 to buy. All but six titles of the back numbers are still in print. Titles include: biblical studies (such as the reprint of Charlie Moule's Lutterworth Worship in the New Testament); patristic studies (such as texts of Hippolytus and of Addai and Mari, and commentaries and other studies, such as Rowan Williams' Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Roots of a Metaphor); Reformation studies (including my own three on Cranmer, and Bryan Spinks' on Luther and the Canon of the Mass); the seventeenth century (including a text of The Westminster Directory); other Anglican themes; general studies of liturgical principles and sacramental issues; and even A Liturgical Glossary (part of the general attempt to help the student). In the process, this series has broadened its base, brought in major scholars in their own right, and not particularly put the evangelicalism of the Group in the shop-window.

Recognition of the role these Studies have played world-wide has come through the recent approach to the Group

by the Alcuin Club, which has found itself without a publisher and with some difficulties of internal administration. The fruit of this is being harvested in 1987, when the annual Alcuin Club book is being merged with the Grove Liturgical Study series to produce a quarterly 'Alcuin/GROW Joint Liturgical Study'. These Studies will be 48 pages in length, slightly more polished than existing Studies in presentation and typeface, have a spine for reference when on shelves, and will cost £2.50 retail. Alcuin Club members will, of course, get their four 1987 issues post free within their subscription of £7, and will do very nicely. The joint publishing will thus represent the main regular Anglican literary output on liturgy in the world.

By the Autumn of 1982 the publishing house owned solely by me was in financial trouble - not through lack of sales, but through ever-increasing amounts of capital being tied up in stock (there are usually 150 or more titles in print). Steps were taken to form a Charitable Company, Grove Books Limited, which, marvellously, finally came into being and started trading two weeks before I was removed from Nottingham and made a bishop. I now am the honorary manager of this Company, and am answerable to a Board of Directors. The Company began with around £25,000, which has limited it slightly more than the founders had hoped, and the Board is elected annually from an Association membership of subscribers who pay £25 per annum to belong. That too is open to Scottish well-wishers.

The address is: Grove Books Limited, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3DS, and an SAE sent there will produce a catalogue of all the titles in print, and those due over the coming months. A certain 'family' atmosphere lingers, and Grove Books' customers the world over not only recognise the product but often write in to me with enthusiasm, with suggestions and with a slight conscious elitism at being the discerning members of the Christian public.....

Colin Buchanan