

# EUCHARISTIC PRACTICE IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TODAY

## THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHURCH SERVICE SOCIETY

### AT GREYFRIARS KIRK HOUSE ON THURSDAY MAY 26th 1983

PAPER by THE REV DR R STUART LOUDEN

#### 1 The Church Service Society

In 1983 it is difficult for us even to picture the unstructured chaos into which public worship in general had degenerated in Scottish Presbyterianism in the first half of the 19th century - repetitive, tedious, lengthy and verbose! Vain repetitions? The Lord's Prayer was seldom heard in church, and Robert Lee spoke of many a minister at prayer "plunging on each occasion into a great wilderness of thought and language - like Abraham, who went out not knowing whither he went."

In that context such infrequent Communion services as were celebrated had forgotten the carefully ordered scriptural pattern for the sacrament laid down in the 1645 Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God, which, incidentally, begins "the communion or supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated". The Directory spells out that "the minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the elements of bread and wine", the bread "in comely and convenient vessels", and the wine "in large cups"; but early Victorian Presbyterianism had forgotten about consecration, far less epiclesis. It was a bleak picture, with both our Catholic and our Reformed heritage obliterated, and the faithful almost bereft of that holy mystery which the Apostle received from the Lord.

"Purely symbolic" in regard to Holy Communion was a catch-phrase still heard in my life time. Yet no authoritative Reformed document affirms other than in such terms as those of the Westminster formularies: "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then inwardly by faith, ..... really and indeed, ..... spiritually receive and feed upon Christ Crucified."

The Church Service Society founded in 1865 has been the main organised influence which has transformed the situation for the Church of Scotland in our time. The founder members were a group of faithful ministers, scripturally

and liturgically informed, devotionally orientated, and pastorally concerned, and they committed themselves to try and transform the bleak eucharistic practice of the Kirk; and, aside from doctrinal and liturgical principle, to expel the pedestrian gloom and sheer dullness and weariness which were obscuring this priceless element in the faith, the Holy Sacrament. The solemnity, always properly associated with Holy Communion, tended to be funereal then, rather than celebratory. Did this stem from 1781 Scottish Paraphrases: "'twas on that night when doomed to know....."? "Doom" struck the note for a sorrowful and distressing memorial service for Jesus Who suffered under Pontius Pilate. This fostered Pelagian repentance rather than evangelical penitence, evoking gratitude and joy. Repentance may be understressed at the Lord's Table today, but the gloom of last century was alien to eucharistic celebration of a present and alive Lord, who died for us and rose again.

In 1867 the Church Service Society published its Euchologion, the first edition of their book of prayers, which analyses the Communion Service in the Early Church, in Orthodoxy and Romanism, and in the Reformed Churches, an analysis providing a rationale for a more ordered Scottish Communion Service. The form and order they were reviving was substantially that of the Westminster Directory, with echoes of Knox's Genevan practice, carefully devised so as not to stir up the superficial criticism of being "high church". This purpose was followed through nearly twenty editions of the Euchologion, and is a token of a long and thorough educative process in faith, devotion and also liturgy, behind the official service books of the 20th century. Later milestones in the process were Prayers for Divine Service (1923) in the Auld Kirk, and also the United Free Church Book of Common Order (1928). What the Church Service Society initiated came to full fruition in the Church of Scotland Book of Common Order (1940), relevantly and competently revised in the Book of Common Order (1979).

In 1983 we can thank God that the accepted Communion Service of the Kirk, in form and structure, yes, and hopefully in theology and devotion, doctrinally and spiritually, is being reverently celebrated in the best traditions of our Catholic and Reformed heritage. In the 118 years since our Society began its work, it is not too much to claim that the Church of Scotland has rediscovered the divine mystery of a true and living memorial of the sacrifice offered once for all upon the Cross - participation in the One Universal Eucharistic Sacrifice within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. In this

historic context let us examine some facets of current eucharistic practice.

## 2 Developments in the Kirk

It was surely a significant moment in the life of our Church when about two decades ago the General Assembly accepted in principle that a weekly eucharist, the Lord's Supper regularly celebrated on the Lord's Day, is the true practice for Christian public worship. Practical issues of course delay the realisation of this standard, but it has been set. Greater frequency of communion celebration has been an encouraging feature throughout my lifetime; and this has also led to shorter and less wordy forms of service, where the essential structure of the eucharist is preserved, and the repetitive element has been lessened. This is an area for continuing experiment and further liturgical study, so that more frequent celebrations become practical as well as being desirable.

At the same time let us gratefully acknowledge our valuable inheritance in the "Big Communion", especially since at least two generations have associated the Spring "Quarterly Communion" with Easter Day. In many congregations Easter Communion has become the high festival of the Christian Year, which is token of both spiritual and devotional revival, as well as evangelical and liturgical renewal in the Church of Scotland. The "Big Communion", as symbol of the whole family in a parish together as a complete family at the Lord's Table, is a precious positive value in Presbyterian practice well worth holding on to. This tradition also discourages a multiplication of slick and slight sacramental occasions without due spiritual preparation and proper solemnity.

I do not propose to devote much time to describing the now agreed and accepted structure, and the form and order of the Lord's Supper. This has become familiar to our people as well as to ministers since the publication of the Book of Common Order (1940). Furthermore our book of praise (CH3) is familiarising more congregations with our accepted form and order, and in particular with the people's responsive participation in the service.

The publication in 1945 of that massive and penetrating study of two thousand years of Christian liturgical practice, Dom Gregory Dix's The Shape of the Liturgy, identifies our present-day Church of Scotland

sacramental practice as within essential Catholic tradition. Dix emphasises four central acts in the Church's leitourgia or divine services: (i) offertory (with consecration) - our Lord took bread; (ii) prayer - He gave thanks; (iii) fraction - He broke it; (iv) communion - He gave to His disciples.

We can all be deeply grateful for the learning and understanding, for the wisdom and devotion, for the dedication to the holy ministry and the pastoral care of congregations, of such scholarly men of God as William McMillan, Oswald B Milligan, Millar Patrick, and John Wilson Baird whose work is behind the Book of Common Order (1940). Working in the General Assembly's Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion they brought the First Order for Holy Communion into acceptance and use. With its publication and astonishingly wide dissemination since 1940 this order has won the widest ecumenical admiration, interest and respect.

### 3 Serving Holy Communion

With a new generally accepted Communion Service being used in the Church, something has to be said about methods of serving the congregation today. We seem to have departed from any obvious Upper Room patterns in regard to the bread and the wine, forgetting even the Westminster Directory's guidance about the elements. This is surely an area of communion practice where visible symbolism should play an important role. Yet diced particles of bread are widely used in our churches excluding any picture of One Loaf, or the breaking of bread from hand to hand.

It is highly questionable whether there is any actual ecclesiastical authority for the so-called "individual cup" which has so largely replaced the "large cups" of the Directory. Besides, "individual" is a most inept word at the Lord's Table, in an ordinance which is corporate adoration and reception. God Himself cannot be termed "individual": He is Trinitarian. But it has been good to hear of our Scottish heritage of large silver Communion Cups finding renewed use in many parishes of late.

Wine is by definition the fermented juice of the grape, so that the Irishism of what is called "unfermented wine" seems to me an irreverence. Are His followers seeking to correct our Blessed Lord when the cup of blessing at the Last Supper clearly held "wine that maketh glad the heart of man"?

In Presbyterian churches the elements are usually served by the elders to the communicants seated in their pews, a very convenient method for serving a large number of communicants. Moreover, this provides a useful liturgical function for the elders underlining the sacral character of the office. The time of serving is a valuable period of sustained silence during the celebration, a silence filled by the mystery of adoration in wordless communion.

The acceptability of this general practice need not exclude occasions when, also according to some Reformed practice, communicants go forward and sit around a long table, with the elements of bread and wine passed from hand to hand. This method has spiritual value in requiring a personal decision to "go forward", as well as offering a deep sense of corporate participation.

Another acceptable Communion practice, very familiar throughout Continental Protestantism, is for the communicants to come forward and stand in a circle or semicircle round the Holy Table for reception. To exercise some flexibility in methods of serving the elements gives variety where variety is relevant and can be enriching.

One irritating irrelevance in my view is a procedure to ensure that the minister communicates after the elders and occasionally after the congregation. Until modern times Catholic and Reformed practice, based on the Scriptures, was to follow the precise actions of Jesus, Who partook (after He had supped) and gave to the disciples: the given ritual for presiding at the eucharist was to minister in His name. Does this particularly Presbyterian deviation arise from trying to teach a better way?

#### 4 Admission to the Lord's Table

I do not propose to elaborate my personal views on the current Church of Scotland discussion anent the Lord's Supper and the Children of the Church. There is surely only one basic and relevant theological issue here, the principle which the Overture affirms as first: "The Lord's Table is open to any baptized person who loves the Lord and responds in faith to the invitation, Take, eat." My personal unease is that this overture was ever framed at all, endeavouring to fence round evangelical truth with a fresh set of unnecessary bye-laws - a chronic disease in the Kirk. Even if some of these proposed regulations can be theologically explained and defended, - though some cannot - why this tautological set of rather silly denominational bye-laws, intruding into the realm of the spiritual and ineffable?

This merely declaratory legislation - always a mistake - could not apply at the existential moment when a baptized believer (unconfirmed) stretches forth his hand to receive the sacramental bread, yes, from the hands of Jesus.

While we rightly endeavour to exercise a proper church discipline, stressing admission to the Lord's Table as within the pastoral oversight of the Kirk Session, we sometimes appear to elevate Communion Rolls and Communion Cards above the claims of the Gospel and even the freedom of God. Communion Cards often seem to have degenerated into a kind of congregational addressograph, hardly tokens of a state of Grace; while Communion Rolls, superseding the older lists of Heads of Houses, a pastoral concept, are often little more than electoral rolls for a vacancy or congregational financial registers. What do we really mean by purging the Roll? The great realities of Holy Baptism, the Christian Family and Holy Communion are spiritual and even divine entities not within the compass of petty rules and regulations. I have even heard references to a "three year rule" and other equal absurdities. The Saviour's claim in mercy upon sinners, and the right of a baptized child to respond to "Take, eat", are not governed by manmade regulations but are in the realm of sheer Sovereign Grace.

The intrusion into sacramental practice of a code of Presbyterian bye-laws is an unfortunate and paltry "fencing of the Table", to use an old and meaningful term, and is part of a prevalent modern sin, namely, trivialization. I fear that this Overture under consideration, whatever its fate, is part of prevalent trivialization in the Kirk. Tabulating specific circumstances under which children may receive the bread and the wine may exclude occasions of conversion - impact in the sacrament. Too much openness here, can lose us solemnity of the right kind, grateful joy and serenity, and also very precious silence at the Holy Table.

Such practical considerations have been much in my mind since communicating frequently of late at Church of England services where families are present in large numbers at the main Sunday Eucharist in many parishes. Pleasing as it is to see all ages going forward to the altar rail to receive the elements or to be blessed, it can produce a very restless and far too noisy church setting. The inclusive, evangelical image is certainly of great spiritual value, but there are practical difficulties: the sheer bustle, the dangerous trivialization of sacramental worship, and, worst of all, being deprived of deep silence.

Various modern developments may be robbing the People of God, not least the lambs in the Christian flock, of the mystery, inexplicable, deep and wonderful, which worshippers, often unconsciously, apprehend in the House of God and at the Table Spread. We have to ponder widely in order to ensure that sacramental occasions which are of God, do offer the unique impact of the ineffable and the holy, and the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

## 5 The Holy of Holies

So far in regard to eucharistic practice we have been talking in the Outer Court of the Temple, but mention of the deeper issues of faith and devotion over against unseemly irreverence and trivialization, calls us to move humbly and in awe into the Holy of Holies where any human comment has to be forgiven for its presumption.

In the life of the Body of Christ we believers approach the Lord's Table professing our faith in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church: a given reality for the members of the Body, welcomed by their One and Only Saviour, the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, present in His Eternal Sacrifice offered once for all upon the Cross. This is the ineffable Glory of the One Christ in His One Body the Church, out of whose membership there is no salvation. Because Christ is One in the Glory of the Holy Trinity, we can confess our faith in One Church.

One and Holy: the modern world, and alas even the 20th Century Church, has forgotten about Holiness. The Otherness, the apartness, the sanctity of the Divine is mediated in the Eucharist. Consecration: the elements of bread and wine are set apart for this holy use and mystery within the company of the faithful, the eucharistic assembly, which is pastored by a minister consecrated himself to bless the people, to proclaim the Gospel and to preside at the feast. Epiclesis: the invocation of the Holy Spirit makes ordained ministry and eucharistic celebration effective. The mystery of Holiness in the Triune God evokes our "Holy, Holy, Holy .....".

We believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Apostolic authority is the warrant for celebrating the Lord's Supper, continuing from St Paul, who received from the Lord what he has handed on to us. This Scriptural tradition imparts a dimension of unity and continuity through time and history to every celebration. This indefinable value, Catholicity, must

imprint eucharistic practice in all our separated churches. Wholeness and inclusiveness mark true Communion, all the saints in heaven and on earth, together in the membership of the One Body of Christ. If Holy Communion does not mean that to us, what has happened to this unique gift and mystery from God in our churches?

We are bidden show the Lord's death until He come, so there is an escatological facet to the Lord's Supper: "next year in Jerusalem". In Communion at the Lord's Table, the walls of sense and time grow thin, and we have foretaste of the heavenly - the Sacrament is the break-through of the heavenly, the unutterable, the ineffable.

In more than four centuries of the Reformed Faith in Scotland - and the Reformation was the rediscovery of a true Catholicity - it is astonishing how little writing on the sacraments has come out of the Kirk in spite of its strong theological tradition. There has been remarkably little since Sermons upon the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, 1590, from the pen of Robert Bruce, Minister at St Giles just before the Union of the Crowns.

We have had scholars and ecclesiastics among the best in Christendom, but a dearth of saints and mystics in the Scottish Church. There have been all too few like Samuel Rutherford at Anwoth three centuries ago, writing: "I think that I see more of Christ than ever I saw; and yet I see but little of what may be seen. Oh that He would draw by the curtains, and that the King would come out of His gallery and His palace, that I might see him! Christ's love is young glory and young heaven."

It is the more significant and welcome to listen to the superb sacramental teaching of two devout Scottish churchmen in the 20th century. "The Lord's Supper is indeed the sacrament of the Real Presence", wrote Donald Baillie in that wonderful posthumous volume, The Theology of the Sacraments (1957). Through deepened and renewed sacramental belief, he has suggested that "we shall learn to approach the Lord's Table not looking inwards on our own souls and striving to work up an effect in the realm of feeling and emotion, but looking beyond ourselves to Him who is waiting to be gracious to us, Him who answers before we call and hears while we are yet speaking, Him who in his grace and love is as near and as real as the bread which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands".

I find Donald Baillie's sacramental theology as thrilling as it is orthodox and authentic. Personally significant to myself in that volume quoted, is his reference to what he describes as "the best book Scotland has produced on the sacraments for a long time", a book which I have kept to hand during my whole ministry. This second 20th century volume is the 1926/7 Croall Lectures of Doctor Harry J Wotherspoon, delivered by the scholarly and godly minister of St Oswald's, Edinburgh, in his 77th year: Religious Values in the Sacraments.

Some of the writing in this book is sacramental teaching at its most exalted, devotionally inspiring and ecumenically relevant, while biblical and evangelical to the core. Especially apt and enriching are his descriptions of the spirituality of sacramental belief and devotion, and in particular his words on the ineffable and transcendent dimensions in Christian faith. His exposition of Real Presence is most impressive and convincing:

"the Presence of Christ, 'special' or not special, in the rite, is matter of general belief; the reality of the giving and of the given, is unquestioned; the objectivity of the heavenly or spiritual part of the Sacrament is recognized by most as implied in the fact of consecration, since faith is receptive, not creative, and can take out of the Sacrament only what is in the Sacrament ..... In the consecration something, as all believe, takes place; after consecration the Elements are not as they were before; there is a change in their destination, in what would now be called their valuation - and it is their Giver, not we, who destines and evaluates them, changing them in their potency toward us. What they are to Christ they are to us. The whole transaction of the Sacrament takes place, not as an episode of earthly event, but on the plane of our Lord's present existence: it is among the epourania, the Heavenlies, in which the conditions of our fleshly existence do not apply, and all is as Christ sees it and as Christ wills. It is not the Elements - it is we and the whole action and the Elements in the setting of that action which are taken into the atmosphere of the supernal: we are lifted into some apprehension of the Eternal: we taste the powers of the coming age and look upon the invisible. It is no objection that such a statement is mystical - if it were not, it could not hope to be true: the sacramental cannot be discussed in material terms - it is only in mystical apprehension that faith can approach some literality of understanding."

In this inner sanctum of faith, my essential plea in relation to Church of Scotland eucharistic practice, is for all of us who believe to go on our knees penitently and humbly, before the Lord Who makes Himself known in the breaking of bread, Himself the Eternal Sacrifice offered for us and to us, so that we may discern in gratitude and joy the Mystery of faith. "Thee, we adore, O hidden Saviour, Thee Who in Thy Sacrament dost deign to be".

I find it perplexing to try and diagnose the low spiritual temperature in so many of our Scottish congregations, so often marked by an absence of devotion and reverence, and lacking in any atmosphere of the supernatural. Part of the malaise, I think, is traceable to the lack of a relevant and vital belief in God the Holy Trinity. The glorious Mystery of the Holy Trinity is central to a vital sacramental apprehension. All our ultimate relationships and purposes, and our faith and spiritual experience, must be of God: in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

There is a Unitarian strand in much of Protestant piety: God is sensed as ontological being (the Unknown God of Mars Hill?); then soteriology fails to take the Incarnation seriously enough, expounding the work of Christ in separation, and forgetting that He is God. Real Sacrament is devalued if not dissolved in such inadequate and misleading a faith. Many believers seek the Third Person of the Trinity in neo-Pentecostalism, while the Epiclesis in the Sacrament seems to have been forgotten. Even when a still inadequate theology modifies this troublesome kind of Unitarian outlook, some kind of naive Trithelism emerges in popular faith.

The Holy Trinity is the supreme Christian mystery, a living faith required for reading the Bible, whether the Creation Story, the Psalms of David, the suffering Servant of Isaiah, or the apocalyptic visions of Daniel or St John the Divine; and supremely of course, in listening to the Gospels, especially the Passion Narrative and the Easter Story.

It is noteworthy that the Holy Trinity can be traced in every vital moment of the texts of the ancient Orthodox Liturgies. This Trinitarian basis tells us something about possible liturgical and sacramental renewal in our time.

The Holy Trinity is the ultimate Mystery proclaimed and confronted in Ineffable Glory in the Eucharistic Sacrifice: God, Lover, Beloved and Love before time was, the same God revealed in the Word Made Flesh, God equally God of Love on Sinai's height and Calvary's Hill, God, the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life - One God in Triune Majesty and Mercy.

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One God Eternal in Love is the Real Presence at the Holy Table, lifting up our vision in doxological apprehension of inexpressible Mystery and Glory.

"Lost in wonder, love and praise", the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

#### **PAPER by THE REV DAVID BECKETT**

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My remit was to "respond" to Dr Loudon's paper. In case this conjures up for anyone the impression of one of those TV discussions where people of diametrically opposed views are lined up and told to argue, I want to say right away that my basic response is one of appreciation and gratitude for the way Dr Loudon has drawn together so many facets of a massive subject. Within the wide spectrum of the Church of Scotland's eucharistic practice (and of its eucharistic theology) I like to think that I stand very much in the same tradition and share the same concerns; so if there are areas of Stuart's talk that I make no comment on, this is because I wholeheartedly endorse them.

The role of this Society for example, and the need for the Society when it was founded: I imagine all of us can readily subscribe to what Stuart said in his introduction. Likewise his finishing pleas for worship that is fully trinitarian and doxological - worship that leaves room for the numinous and the sovereign action of a transcendent God. There may be some who would want in the discussion time to challenge that perspective, but I am going to base my comments mainly on the middle section of what Stuart said.

I find it difficult to share his grateful acknowledgement of our valuable inheritance in the quarterly Communion, at least in the form which it takes in the Lowlands now. If these occasions could be said to mark real milestones on our spiritual pilgrimage, I would see value in that; and where the sacramental season is still conscientiously observed they may

perhaps constitute such milestones. But even in the parishes where there are vestiges of a Communion season the disparity in numbers between those coming to preparatory services and those who communicate seems to indicate that the system has largely collapsed. It seems to me that either we opt for the big infrequent special event (which was undoubtedly very precious to our forebears who did the thing thoroughly and took the best part of a week to it) or we dismantle the structure that makes a Communion Sunday so different from other Sundays - which means the black ties and striped trousers, the artificially tidy seating arrangements, the Communion card, the lot - and we work towards Communion as the norm of Sunday worship. It is the atmosphere and the associations of the quarterly Communion that I am sure stand most in the way of a regular sacrament, particularly in Kirk Sessions. We underestimate the tension many elders feel, every time they face Communion duty as they've always known it. It is a tension born of reverence but it is very real, and it is greatly aggravated by those trays of individual cups which always seem to be glued at one corner to the tray beneath.

Our latest Book of Common Order has plumped clearly for an end to the traditional Communion season - no preparatory service and no thanksgiving, and only a short outline order for a Sunday when Communion is not celebrated. I share Dr Loudon's admiration of the service that it carries forward very little altered from the 1940 book, and I recognise its ecumenical value. It is a fine flagship for the Church of Scotland to have; but I don't think on its own it is enough. What it offers is essentially one service matched to three different Bible translations. This rather assumes that ministers will use the one with which they are happiest, and unless they are good at switching from one linguistic idiom to another (which most of us are not very good at) this leaves them with just one order each. If we are to move towards the Assembly's aim of regular Communion, I suggest that the next step after the demythologizing of sacramental occasions should be the provision of more models, with more flexibility especially in the great Communion prayer. The 1979 Book actually offers much less than its predecessor: no alternative order, no shortened form, no order for a house Communion or for celebrations in small groups; no suggestion that there may be different ways of serving such as Stuart suggested; and no hint of different contexts for Communion other than the Sunday worship of the whole congregation.

If the Assembly's Committee on Public Worship offers just one prototype, and fails to carry the whole Church with it (and I doubt if the present single

form is so widely accepted as Stuart seems to think) then we can hardly blame those who are not in sympathy with it for finding themselves in a do-it-yourself situation or for suspecting that we are trying to give the Kirk a prayer book. And this is my main reservation about the undoubted achievements of the Public Worship Committee and of this Society - that we have been too Thatcherish in our promotion of the things we believe in, and we have given the impression that there is no alternative. There have to be alternatives; and if we explored them it might help to tackle the problem that Stuart mentioned over the noise and bustle of some Anglican Parish Communion. Many of us have found value in having separate morning services with a deliberately different atmosphere and ethos. I don't see why the principle should not extend to sacramental occasions if we offered some material allowing for more movement and for crisper language than the rolling sentences of our Communion order as it stands. The Church Service Society Record is an ideal medium for the pooling of resources and the sharing of ideas. In its present form it offers one of the most hopeful and realistic ways forward for the kind of loosening up that I would like to see.

Dr Loudon voiced his distaste of some of the bizarre ways people try within the Church of Scotland to improve on what the scriptures tell us our Lord did: the diced bread, the medicinal glasses, the misplaced tea party manners that make ministers insist on being served last. I share his abhorrence of all these, and I think he let the church off lightly. There are, I believe, congregations with a nearly slot-machine communion, where the sacrament is individually prepackaged, sitting waiting at your pew before you come into church. When I went to my last parish I was appalled to find so-called Communion Wine obtained by special order from the chemist in a choice of fruity flavours. On the side of every bottle was a large red label, warning that this product was not meant for drinking and that it was dangerous to exceed the sacramental dose.

In fairness though to those who perpetrate such near-blasphemies, there is very little help for ministers or members (perhaps specially members) on the whys and wherefores of a rightly ordered sacrament. We need something very basic, explaining why the common cup, the sliced bread (better still perhaps a suitably shaped loaf), why the Great Entry and the order of receiving. Ministers trying to persuade elders of the value of a change in practice have very little to give them to read. Remembering that his predecessor had quite different ideas, suspecting that his successor will have different views again, Kirk Sessions naturally see

as eccentricities or foibles concepts which to most of us are central to the catholic and Reformed tradition. I hope very much that the new manual on worship being prepared by the Committee on Public Worship will help to meet the need for clear and simple practical guidance. It is not being given in the colleges, at least not in all of the colleges, and our eucharistic practice at the moment is far too much governed by folklore and local oral tradition. If the new manual is too academic to be helpful to the church at large, perhaps this Society could publish something in a pamphlet form specifically about Communion practice, but I think it would be preferable for the guidance to be given by a Committee of the General Assembly.

One more thought, connected with Stuart Louden's splendid closing section on the transcendental nature of the sacrament. I accept all he said on the need for the mystical and the disappointing spiritual atmosphere at many of our celebrations; but I think all of us who accept that emphasis maybe need to be reminded of the human element in worship too: the souls who gather only on a rare Communion Sunday and are then submitted to the formidable spiritual athletics of Communion Order Number One. I know that in the best liturgical circles relevance comes near to being a dirty word. But worship, besides reaching out to the all-holy, the ineffable, must be earthed and grounded in the people we are leading. Jesus did not scorn the relevant for the sake of the numinous. He conveyed the numinous, the mystery and marvel of God's sovereign grace, as surely in the stories of the lost sheep and the returning drop-out as he did in the great discourses of St John. At the moment there is danger of polarisation between those who are socially aware but often have too little of the supernatural and transcendental in their worship, and those who are concerned with rightly ordered worship but don't always take their congregations with them. I believe it should be possible to fashion worship that has mystery and stretches out to the ineffable while being framed in language people can identify with; indeed I would claim that it is the greatest single challenge facing us in worship at the moment.

In all of this though we should make room for a note of wonder that the Lord does manage, in spite of everything we do, to make himself known to his people. All our worship is inadequate to some degree, there are no blacks and whites. I find it helpful, if I am wincing at the way some minister is stripping down the sacrament and wrecking all its symbolism to remember that God's grace is mercifully stronger than man's disobedience: to realise that even when we are impertinent enough to take what we've received from the Lord and impose on it our self-conscious

notions, our obsessions about speed or hygiene, drawing room manners or whatever, somehow his people are fed and their souls are nourished in spite of us. I think it is important we hang on to that.

#### COMMENTS by THE VERY REV PROF T F TORRANCE

I am delighted that Dr Loudon has laid such stress upon the Order for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in the 1940 Book of Common Order, to which, incidentally, Professor William Manson, his teacher and mine, also made a very important contribution. I would like to add only three comments.

First, How is it that in our recent Scottish practice we seem to be omitting the pouring of the wine into the cup, while we nevertheless retain the breaking of the bread, in the act of celebration? I recall John Calvin's remark that 'almost the whole force of the Sacrament consists in the words "It is broken for you; it is shed for you" ' (Inst. 4.17.2). This was in line with his general understanding of the sacramental celebration that 'what the minister figures and attests by outward action, God performs inwardly' (Inst 4.14.17). Calvin, of course, had the evangelical texts in mind, Matt 26: 26-28; Mark 14: 22-24; and Luke 22: 19-20, and not only that of St Paul in 1 Cor 11: 24 where the words 'shed for you' are not found. Might it not be better to conflate these passages, as he did, and as we did in the old Scottish tradition, and when at the words 'This is my blood shed for you', wine was poured into the chalice? It seems to me that the 'fraction' needs properly to be balanced by the 'fusion'. There are some parishes which still retain this original practice.

Secondly, It is unfortunate that our Scottish rite is governed still by the Latin and Western tradition in the celebration of the Eucharist which terminates with the communion in the body and blood of Christ, whereas the ancient tradition of the Church, especially in the East, preserves the essential place of the resurrection in the Eucharistic pascha. Roughly speaking, as we can see in the writings of Irenaeus, the Eucharist celebration was governed by and followed the incarnational emphasis upon the katabasis of the Son of God, in becoming man and offering himself in atoning sacrifice for us, and upon the ánabasis of the risen and ascended Christ who presents us, united to himself and his self-consecration on our behalf, to the Father as those whom he has redeemed and restored to true sonship, and for whom he eternally intercedes as our High Priest, in whom offering and offerer are one and the same. The Latin and Western tradition has been one that terminated the celebration at the point of communicating

in the body and blood of Christ, and thus severed it from the other half of the whole Eucharistic celebration, that which corresponds to the anabasis of the crucified, risen and enthroned Lamb of God. In the older Scottish tradition the Lord's Supper was called 'the action' which represented the Latin actio gratiarum = eucharistia, but that 'action' included the 'thanksgiving' that followed the act of communicating in Christ through partaking of the bread and wine. When the 'thanksgiving service' that used to follow Holy Communion fell away, the last vestiges of the Eastern emphasis upon Eucharistic communion in the ascension and self-presentation of the risen Saviour to the Father also fell away. How different that is from the teaching of William Milligan in the early days of our Church Service Society and of the Scottish Church Society! In the Ordinal and Service Book of 1962, edited by the late John Lamb, an attempt was made to restore the Biblical and early Christian stress on the resurrection, through the reading of John 20: 19-23 (in relation to the Latin of which the term 'mass' evidently came to be used), and through prayers, echoing the Eucharistic Liturgy embedded in the Apocalypse in which resurrection, ascension, and the mission of the enthroned Lamb throughout the ages have their place in a Trinitarian doxology.

Thirdly, one further point, which bears on this. In the 1940 Book of Common Order the coming again of Christ to make all things new is regularly conflated with the coming of the Holy Spirit, so that the real eschatological force of the final Advent of Christ is played down. I recall William Manson's horror when I pointed this out to him, and his insistence that it must be put right. This is a correction we tried to carry out in the 1962 Ordinal and Service Book. Since that is the rite that the General Assembly has regularly used, it still remains the most authoritative rite in the Church of Scotland. How happy I am that this year it has in the main been restored at our Assembly celebration.