

E D I T O R I A L

o o o o o

A catholic issue of "The Record", embracing the past history as well as the vicissitudes which beset a more enlightened minister in Aberdeen; a contribution from beyond The United Kingdom (hopefully the first of many); a learned exploration into the origins of the Institution Narrative within the Anglican Tradition; a brief but telling "straw poll" on "Thee" versus "You"; Calvin's doctrine of Posture which our President's paper on "Our Liturgical traditions" did not have time to explore but which, nevertheless dug deep into the soup pot producing some illuminating facts.

A member of The Church Service Society remarked in a car park that he was becoming rather tired of "the daft lads" within the Church. Laying myself open to a like charge, and noting and acknowledging Charles Robertson's highlighting of Cox, Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland:

"It is to be noted that the Book of Common Order issued in 1940 by authority of the General Assembly and since revised periodically, expresses 'the mind of the Church with regard to its offices of worship, in orders and forms which, while not fettering individual judgement in particulars, will set the norm for the orderly and reverent conduct of the various public services in which ministers have to lead their people'".

I would hold that the time is fast approaching when the Book of Common Order (whether 1940, 1979 or their successor) should not only be in the hands of all ministers, but also in the hands of worshippers in all our congregations to ensure the orderly and reverent conduct of the various public services of God's people in the Kirk, but particularly at Communion Services. Peter Davidson was honest enough to admit that there were times when he conducted, as he said, "dull services" (many of us would admit the same, with regret), but with a Book of Common Order in use, at least the unfolding mystery and drama of the Christian Year within the context

of the Eucharist would be seemly.

It would not prevent the crass theological ignorance of the minister who said that the Prologue of St John's Gospel echoed the opening chapter of Genesis "where Moses wrote..."; nor would it prevent the same minister looking at his watch and saying "Time is running by. So must I"; nor would it again prevent the same minister in offering intercession for the Church doing so in the following words: "Lord we pray that the prayer we pray ...", but it might stop him reading, as part of the Institution narrative:

"But let a man examine himself, (read twice) and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" and doing so with the 1940 Book of Common Order in his hands which he then chose to ignore for the remainder of what purported to be a Communion Service. It would certainly prevent this writer leaving that Kirk wondering whether what he had sat through for one and a half hours was indeed a Communion Service, and it might prevent some other members of the Kirk asking the writer "Well, what did you think of him?" and it might allow for some of the joy, hope and promise of God's kindly grace as mediated by the Sacrament to break through again and again not just to the members of his Kirk but also to this tired old world which is patently tired of the Church in so many untidy places

Pace my car park friend, but I think that it is we who are being "daft lads" in not standing up, time and time again, for what we know to be right and not trying to be all things to all men in the worship of Almighty God.

There are elements within our liturgical tradition which are distinctive, time-honoured and edifying and I would suggest that we resist, for example, the well-publicised barbs of Stewart Lamont, slung at the worship in Paisley Abbey as well as all other barbs, both overt and covert: and that, from the Northern Isles, through the Western Isles as well as mainland Scotland, there is worship which is evangelical, liturgical and catholic as Charles Robertson has expounded. It would indeed be a pity were that catholic tradition in our worship continue to be diminished in our day.

Graeme Longmuir.