

COMMON ORDER

The Revd Charles Robertson

Dr Stewart Todd's magisterial review of *Common Order* in the last issue of the *Record* concludes that "this is a worthy piece of work. The Society will surely accord it a warm welcome and thank God for it." His own welcome for the book, however, is not entirely unqualified. His reservations either relate to matters of personal taste, or raise questions of academic scholarship, or express regret for what he sees as missed opportunities. Of the latter, there are two in particular for which Dr Todd seems not to be in possession of all the facts.

The first is his contention that "The Compilers of *Common Order*, lacking the courage of the *Book of Common Order 1979*, or avoiding their foolhardiness, have not opted for any one order of worship for a morning service where Holy Communion is not celebrated." But when the General Assembly in 1987 instructed the Panel on Worship to proceed with the production of a new *Book of Common Order*, it did so on the clear understanding that the new book should follow the pattern and replicate the provision of the 1940 book and not of the 1979 book. Although no motion was passed to that effect, many speakers in the debate expressed their preference for the 1940 model, regretting that the 1979 book was so slender and so single-minded in its provision. An undertaking was sought and given that the new book would reflect the comprehensiveness and variety of the 1940 book, and would not be as restricted as the 1979 book. Courage or foolhardiness did not enter into it: the compilers of *Common Order* simply carried out the wishes of the General Assembly.

The second matter on which Dr Todd "takes issue" is "the inclusion in all models (Orders for Holy Communion) of the narrative of the Institution as a separate item and the absence of any suggestion that the words can be included in the eucharistic prayer. The 1979 book made this clear in rubrics and actually put the Warrant into square brackets." Yes, but on two separate occasions this specific question was raised in the General assembly, once by Dr William G Young of Resolis, and once by Professor James Whyte of St Andrews. As a result, the General Assembly instructed the Panel on Worship to insert into the 1979 book a slip of paper recording that "The General Assembly (1986) have declared that 'the use of the words of institution as a warrant, and not as part of the eucharistic prayer, continues to be normal usage in the Church of Scotland.' [see pp 8, 22, 25-36]". Further, it was made clear in the debate that there was a requirement on the Panel, according to "the normal usage of the Church of Scotland", to include the words of institution in any future Orders for Holy Communion as a warrant and not as part of the eucharistic prayer. Here again, the compilers of *Common Order*, whatever their own thoughts on the matter, fulfilled the express wishes of the General Assembly when they constructed the new Orders for Holy Communion.

I am grateful to Dr Todd for his searching review of *Common Order*, and for his conclusion that "*Common Order* is a piece of liturgical work with which to engage seriously and if there are details with which to find fault there is also a very great deal of substance to admire."