

THE MOST URGENT CALL TO THE KIRK: THE CELEBRATION OF CHRIST IN THE LITURGY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

The PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS to the Church Service Society
delivered by the Revd H W M Cant, MA, BD, STM, Kirkwall
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It is a great honour to have been asked to be President of the Church Service Society, and I wish to thank you for calling me to this Office. I am well aware of the liturgical and theological giants who have gone before me, and to many of them I would express my indebtedness. I speak in this Presidential Address as a working minister who has, with others, for long been concerned to conduct the Liturgy of Word and Sacrament in a way that has, under God, meaning and renewing power for all who come. It is a difficult calling but, as I hope I shall be able to convey in this paper, a most urgent and necessary one for the Church of Scotland today.

I. CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF LIFE

It is the year 1117 and the place is the little Church in the Orcadian Island of Egilsay. It is Easter and the Service is in progress. The people have heard the Epistle and Gospel, and now they are bringing their gifts to the old priest. The bread and wine is the sign of the giving of themselves; in an Orcadian writer's words: With these they offer God everything that is theirs - their buniions, their jars of oil, bright hearthstones, the long nights they lie awake listening to the sea on the rocks when the fishermen are out."¹ Says the priest, "Will it be perhaps that one or two of these same earthy people will be quickened, the green shoot and the golden stalk will soar out of their brutishness, fit ones for the threshing floors of purgatory? Doubtless. All of them, I pray. For this we were born --- Once more I have done it. What seems to be impossible has happened. The Body and the Blood of our Lord lie on the altar before me. It is accomplished. The church is drowned in a terrible and beautiful silence --- God is come among us. Our little gifts of bread and wine he returns to us loaded with blessing and beauty and peace and love and glory illimitable. Our Agnus Dei. Himself he gives to us -- And so now when I bless the people of Egilsay at the end of the Mass, I bless him in particular, whose face is as bright and as doomed as a

stone with spring sunlight on it that the builder will soon gather into a new wall." ² That to me is a splendidly poetic description of Earl Magnus' last Mass. It is a glorious picture of that amazing transformation of life which our Lord came to bring. We may not agree with what was said to have happened suddenly to the bread and wine, but it is still God's sure and gracious purpose, through the celebration of Christ in Word and Sacrament to change and renew the lives of His people. The risen Christ in every age is meant to be the agent of this transformation.

Again and again the Church struggles to find renewal, time after time, there are schemes devised for its new life, one such is contained in the Report on a National Programme for Evangelism. I trust this programme will do good in many places, but the risen Lord does not call us, first and foremost in the parishes, to listen to yet another Report. He calls Ministers and Kirk Sessions and people to celebrate Him in Word and in Sacrament, Sunday by Sunday, and to have confidence that His presence there will transform the Church members, individually and corporately, as they hear His Word truly and worthily receive his Sacraments. The ship of the Church struggles to bring in its catch, just as the disciples did long ago on the Sea of Galilee, when on the shore there stood a Stranger watching over them, not to damn them, but to bless them. They had toiled all night and had caught nothing, but when they came under His orders - "Cast the net on the right side of the ship" (St John 21 v 6), there was a transformation of failure. So too when Jesus said "Come and dine" (St John 21 v 12) and they did so, there would immediately take place that renewal of life and fellowship with their risen Master and with one another for which their hearts longed.

Every Parish Church is meant to be, each Sunday morning, the great centre of the transformation of life. Do the Ministers and the Elders and the ordinary members of the congregation really believe this great fact for Christian faith and life? The writer of these words certainly did, though it must be admitted that he was speaking of a Eucharist: "Here at this service we enter the very workshop of the new world. Here the master carpenter is in action, refashioning matter and men, forming and tooling the body which is the instrument of his mission. When we have been to Communion, we have been present at the changing of the world, present at the carpenter's bench, yes, and on the carpenter's bench, so that our whole lives come out chiselled and renewed." ³

I now move on to look at the way in which this transformation of life, under the risen Lord, can be expected to take place in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

II. THE CELEBRATION OF CHRIST IN THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

A. THE GOSPEL OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

The worship of the Church of Scotland in the 1980's is, in most parts of the country, much the same as it was in the 1950's when I began my ministry, in this sense, that its emphasis is still today on the Word, rather than the Sacrament.

Most Sunday morning Services are still services of the Word without the Sacrament. Where Eucharistic practice has increased, there is evidence that it is often being done at an Evening Service, but there is no need for despondency for our risen Lord loved the Church and gave Himself for her. We have always to remember how precious is the Church to her sole Head and King:

"From Heaven He came and sought her,
To be His holy bride;
With His own Blood He bought her
And for her life He died" ⁴

And the Church of Scotland, as part of the Church Catholic, is, by grace, despite her faults, called by her Lord to be His holy bride. The bride is one who makes herself available. So our Parish Church congregations have to make themselves available, Sunday by Sunday, as well as at other times, to Him who is their Head and King. They are called forth on Resurrection Day to have the privilege of meeting with the risen Lord, to celebrate Him, to make room for Him, to put Him in the centre of their corporate gathering, humbly listen to Him, bringing themselves under His orders again. They are corporately and individually called out to hear His commands. Barth puts the point this way: "A Commander calls his Officers and N.C.O.'s to the front, to make certain communications to them and give them their orders. It is in this act, this reception of communication and command that the real Church exists. Thus and in no other way!" ⁵ Of course what our Lord has to say is not simply commands for another week, though worship will include these. Scripture does say "This is my beloved Son: Hear Him" (St Mark 9 v 7). Yet before the imperatives of the Gospel, there must come the indicatives. He who is the risen One tells of what He has done for us. He always shows His people the powerful redeeming marks of serving, suffering and forgiving love.

"Again we have the paradox: the risen Christ presents Himself through the Cross --- He draws us through the spectacle of His death. He does not introduce Himself

to us in His glory, but only through His suffering. If we want to know the risen Christ, we must not seek to come to Him but by the Cross". ⁶ And Calvin says: "Christ is never to be separated from the sacrifice of His death." Proud men are ashamed of Christ's humiliation and therefore they fly to God's incomprehensive divinity. But faith will never reach heaven unless it submits to Christ, who appears to be a low and contemptible God, and will never be firm if it do not seek a foundation in the weakness of Christ". ⁷ This paradoxical fact of Christ the Lord, risen and yet crucified, is clearly proclaimed to all who enter the Cathedral Church of St Magnus, for there on the great East window, in the upper part is Christ, risen and ascended, and yet on the lower panel of the same window, Christ in agony on the Cross.

In every genuine service of the Word, Christ comes not to condemn but to save. He comes to bless His people, showing them His wounds for their sakes; He says as of old: "Peace be unto you" And so our risen Lord comes again and again on a Sunday morning clothed with His Gospel, to bestow upon all who come in penitence, in humility, and in faith, forgiveness for sin, and His most glorious humanity. As the years pass our people do not need less forgiveness and restoration to fellowship with their Lord and with one another, but more, for like their minister, they often become more and more aware of the interior nature of sin, and of how easily they fall short of the glory of Christ in word and thought and deed. For many in the Church, and I believe, for all in this Society, this forgiveness held out to us by Christ in His Word, is sealed to us in the Sacrament.

Here is how an Orcadian minister of the last century put it: "When the Holy Mysteries are being celebrated; when the Blessed Redeemer offers Himself to your very embrace; when here you taste and handle things unseen - ask Him to send afresh to you His pardon and to give to you His grace --- Who has not regrets for the past? Who does not feel that he has come short? Who does not at times earnestly and really desire to be away from the world, to be alone with Jesus, to tell Him all, to hold Him by the feet and worship Him? Here, then penitent one; here then tired and distressed heart, is Jesus, ready to meet you, ready to comfort you." ⁸

But now we must ask where are the places of encounters between the risen Lord and His people in these services of the Word in which this Gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation is proclaimed. The order of these services has been much debated not least within this Society. For example in 1889, Dr Sprott and other members of the Editorial Committee dissented from a decision to have the Lord's Prayer at the end of the first prayer in the service and the prayers

of thanksgiving and intercession before the sermon; the ground of this dissent being, "besides the departure from Primitive and Reformed usage --- that the order of the Communion which is the normal service of the Church should be followed as closely as possible at other times." ⁹ But whatever the order of service, two places of encounter must be mentioned; the reading and the preaching of the Word.

II B THE READING AND PREACHING OF THE WORD

The charge is sometimes made that "the traditional Reformed attitude towards Scripture reading without exposition reveals a certain contempt." ¹⁰ Such a charge is to be taken seriously for some would maintain that there is evidence for this contempt in many congregations. Part of this evidence is to be found in the easy handing over of the reading of scriptures to lay people, as if they can be quite adequate for this, though not of course for any exposition on what has been read. Where do we stand in the Church of Scotland in this matter? It would, I think, be true to say that only in a few congregations are the lessons regularly read by a rota of readers, but at certain services, such as Armistice, one finds lay men or women reading the lessons. There are grounds for saying that such reading can be dangerous practice unless lay people get proper rehearsal and time to prepare their reading, and unless they understand that such reading is a great responsibility and privilege. Each reader must never forget that "the Gospel is enclosed in the letter of the Bible and must be freed, that to read scripture is to experience the paschal joy; the Lord reappears, He who is the Word, to tell us of His love and His will, to teach us who He is and who we are, to summon us and give us life." ¹¹ But the readers should know like the minister, that the risen Lord does not automatically come, that the words can be read, and yet there is no vibrant hearing of His Word. So the reader must be taken in with the minister's preparation for the service, and the importance of prayer that the Spirit may give illumination to what is read, must be stressed, so that Scripture can do its work of judgement and salvation.

If Christ wills to encounter His people in the reading of the Word, he also wills to do this through the preaching of the Word.

In a Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the General Assembly of 1973, called "The Reformation Doctrine of the Word of God" it was pointed out that "very often (though not always) the immediate concern of the Reformers and of the Confessions is with the viva voce communication of the Gospel i.e. with the Church's proclamation, with preaching." And Calvin is quoted saying that "it is a singular privi-

lege that He (God) designs to consecrate to Himself the mouths and tongues of men that His voice may resound in them". Yet again this Assembly Report reminds us that the Scots Confession puts the pure preaching of the Word as the first note of the Church: "The Notes therefore of the true Kirk of God we believe, confess, and avow to be first, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed Himself to us ---". Article XVIII. Today, however, there is within the Church of Scotland a questioning of preaching as a meaningful way of communicating the Gospel. The questioning is rooted to some extent in the thought that the communication of ideas requires an I-thou relationship which is a shared process and the contention is that preaching is not this, but is monological. In an essay called "The Word and the Words" in a book recently published called "Encounter with God", the writer has an interesting discussion on the forms of preaching, in the course of which he asks, "Is the declamatory form or oration really suitable, when the setting might suggest a more informal conversational type of talk? It highlights the authority of the preacher, but may also suggest that he/she stands "six feet above contradiction" beyond challenge or questioning, despite the fact that some sermon content may be open to question or positively invite discussion".¹² The writer obviously feels that the sermon in its traditional form is unsatisfactory without the adjustments of the preacher being open to questioning, and without the congregation "but if we genuinely believe that preaching has to do with communicating meaning, both adjustments are essential. One reflects on the need for much more effective adult education in our Churches".¹² I feel that this essay must have been written by an educationalist rather than a preacher! Certainly no one could maintain that there is not need for more effective adult education in the Parish Church, yet my position is that, in the power of the Spirit and by the grace of prayer, the traditional sermon without any questioning, can still prove even today, despite problems of modern thought and language, a profound way of effectively communicating the penetrating and transforming Word of God.

In the Liturgy of the Church of Scotland then, we must still have a sure place for celebrating the risen Lord, for making room for Him, for listening to Him, not only in the reading but in the preaching of the Word. "In Christ's new order" it has been written, "and for all who believe in it, worship means meeting together with him, hearing what he has to say to us. We do not have to make any secret of our preacher's fallibility and our own spiritual deafness -- we gather (in Church) with expectation, because we believe He can and will take up the preacher's stumbling words into his service and enable us to hear through them His own word to us -- When Christ speaks to us, he tells us the truth about our lives - truth that goes home, truth that commits. When Christ goes into the church and teaches, then worship becomes a living breathing experience." ¹³

But if all this is the truth about preaching, then it inevitably must be a struggle and agony for every preacher. He knows that he shrinks from it, and yet he knows he must do it. He knows he is utterly inadequate to speak of the Great Mystery of the Saviour's Love on the Cross and of the equally mysterious power of His Resurrection; yet he is called to be a witness to these saving acts through the proclamation of the Word. All this drives the preacher to tremble in the vestry before every service. However, he knows he must speak that which he has been given to say, and he needs to be upheld by the prayers of his people so that he can preach with humility, though with confidence despite his weakness. This kind of understanding of preaching makes enormous demands on a minister during the week, for unless he is open to the risen Lord breaking through to him in the events and relationships of his daily work, as well as through Scripture and prayer, he may well not receive an anointing of the Spirit to speak to his people on Sunday, through the symbol of human words.

Every Sunday service then is a tremendous adventure for to whom will the risen Lord speak with resurrecting power today? To whom will He give transformation of life this morning? And when they pass you at the door with tears streaming down their face and tell you that they must not delay any longer but seek instruction in the faith or a special coming to the Table for a re-dedication of their lives, then you give thanks that the Lord has come and done His saving work.

What I have written may seem to strike far too triumphant a note - though these things have happened in St Magnus Cathedral as elsewhere - so let me confess that there are plenty who pass me at the door without any tears, and who never ask for re-dedication!

II C THE CLIMACTIC POINT OF THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

But is the Word read and preached really the climactic point of the service? Very many people in congregations would say that it is. According to this view, the people are meant to go away, each one, with the Gospel message ringing in their ears, and live it out in the coming week. Yet others see the climax of the service differently. They in no sense wish to play down the place of the sermon; the preaching of the Word of God is for them the Word of God, but they see an order within the service of the Word, which is in the central tradition of public worship, both Primitive and Reformed, and which carries the worshippers forward to a climactic point beyond the sermon in thanksgiving, self-offering, and fellowship. This order is also a logical order in their eyes; approach to God

leads to hearing the Word of God which in turn, lends to response to that revealed Word in thanksgiving, oblation, and fellowship. Again this same order is a biblical order "We love because He first loved us". That is the sequence of this worship. "The revelation of God in Holy Scripture, and the response of His children in the fellowship of the great prayer". ¹⁴

It is surely right then, that the worshippers should come away from this worship, not only with a Gospel message for the individual, but with a strong sense of having been made a member again of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, with a new awareness of being joined once more to the joyful believing and committed company of the whole Church in heaven and upon earth in whose fellowship they happily unite in the Lord's Prayer.

If the transformation of life is a reality within the service of the Word through the presence of the risen Lord, how much more in the service of the Word and Sacrament.

III THE CELEBRATION OF CHRIST IN THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

A THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

In my time at New College, the late Professor William Manson once attended a student retreat. He was asked: "What really is sin?" He replied "Sin is crucifying Jesus". I thought that a strange reply at the time. I now see that it was a profound reply, for the essence of man's sin is that in subtle and more obvious ways he still crucifies Jesus. So every sacrament brings home to us through the remembrance of the Cross, not only the judgement our Lord endured for mankind, but our own judgement and our need for penitence: And yet every sacrament, through that same remembrance, brings home to us the perfect righteousness of Christ, and his offering of perfect obedience which reached its climax on Calvary's hill. And both the judgement endured and the obedience offered, made possible the redemption of mankind. Christ's death is often seen as a great fire of God's love and peace which burns out of the communicant at the Lord's Table, his sinful self love and self will. Through remembering Christ's death in this deep way, being drawn into it inwardly, and being forgiven and renewed in mind and heart, the partakers of the Lord's Supper is made a member of the mystical Body of Christ. "The fellowship and the death are inseparable" wrote Archbishop Ramsay. " 'fellowship' has been created since, starting with the death of Jesus, men have died to themselves as separate 'self-hoods', and have been found alive in one another and in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus". ¹⁵

Yet it has to be said that it is very easy along this memorialist road to become a Pelagian - we remember what Christ has done for us in the past, we recall the wonder of His dying love for our sins, and then we seek to make our human response. We very easily forget that the ability to make the response of dying and rising again comes from the ascended Christ through the Spirit.

III B THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION OF THE LIVING CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

There is more, then to the celebration of Christ in the Eucharist than the remembrance of His death. Professor Reid has written "We shall not rightly say that the object of Eucharistic remembrance is the death of Jesus on the Cross in and by itself. The words themselves forbid this limitation. Our Lord tells His disciples to do this not in remembrance of His death, but in remembrance of Him. He who is remembered is, of course, He who died, but He is not less certainly He who, being dead, is alive again for evermore".¹⁶ Much the same point is made by Dr W D Maxwell when he wrote: "The Eucharist was not conceived as a mere memorial to one who had lived and died and was to be remembered as a great and good man. It was worship offered in and through and to a living Lord, whom death could not hold and who was alive for evermore. The Lord's Supper was not a sad meal of remembrance commemorating one who had walked with us for a little and has departed, but a festival of glad thanksgiving and fellowship with the risen Lord and Redeemer".¹⁷

A genuine celebration then of our Lord in the Eucharist, a celebration in accordance with the catholic practice of the Church, must include joyful thanksgiving, not only for the saving death, but for what the risen Lord is doing now. "Lift up your Hearts" means give praise to God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, rejoice over the victory of Christ over sin and death, rejoice not least in what He continues to do before the Father's throne, rejoice that His work goes on there, His work in the late Professor Milligan's terms of offering and interceding and blessing.

Celebrating Christ in the Sacrament means rejoicing over what He continues to do in heaven, but it further means rejoicing over what this risen and ascended Lord is doing on earth, being present there, through the Spirit, giving His own special purpose to the consecrated bread and wine, and by that same Spirit, quickening the worship of every congregation so that they are truly able to offer themselves a living sacrifice to the God and Father of this same Christ. Christians should come away from every Eucharist with a song in the heart, not just because they

have confessed their sins and found forgiveness for the past, not just because they have committed themselves anew to Christ's service and to His people, but because there has been born in them, by the Spirit, through the whole form of the Sacrament, through its ritual and ceremony, a new and stronger awareness of their risen and ascended Lord, whose work goes on in heaven and upon earth and from whose gracious hands they receive blessing, the blessing of the Spirit; and through whom they receive all the wonder of His life and love within the fellowship of the saints on earth and in heaven. These words are worth pondering: "We offer the look-back at the transaction of the Cross rather than the up-look and uplift that conveys a victory. What was effected by Christ was not merely a transaction to be recalled but a high priesthood for ever to be availed on -- He leads captivity captive: releasing us that we might be chained to Him. But do we adequately convey in addition that "He gives gifts to men": the Holy Spirit; the gift of all good things to them that ask Him? -- If our consciences are really to be cleansed from dead works to serve the living God, we must portray a living High Priest, and not just the memory, however central, of a transaction on the Cross" . 18

III C THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY OF CHRIST

If it is rightly felt by many of us that the memorialist view of the Eucharist is inadequate, and if our people again and again say that they find the celebration of our High Priest's work in heaven, if not on earth, sufficient to grasp, what is the best way of interpreting the Eucharist for our Kirk Sessions and people today. I believe it is best put in the form of a great act of thanksgiving, a festival if you like, of praise and thanksgiving for God's great and redeeming love in Christ. Or, Christologically, it is thanksgiving for what Christ did in the past on the Cross, with all the benefits He won for us there, and for what He, as living Lord, continues to do in heaven and earth, conforming His Church to His likeness, preparing a Kingdom of Justice, Love and Peace until He comes. But where our people often fail to understand the Sacraments is that they do not always recognise that giving thanks to the Father means meeting with the living Christ. We do not make enough of the Benedictus: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." We need to spell this out for our people: blessed is our Saviour who comes once more to bless His people with His saving power; blessed is our risen Lord who will stoop low and enter the door of every humble penitent enter the door of every humble penitent and waiting soul gathered there round His Table; blessed is our Christ whose genuine purpose it is in the bread and wine, to pour His own Spirit and Life into every guest at this supper who hungers and thirsts over Him. And if we do not make enough of the Benedictus

we do not make enough on the other hand, of the fact that meeting with our risen Lord means that we have to give our all to the One who gives everything to us, who gives to us His Body and Blood, His glorified Humanity. We do not sufficiently emphasise to our people, that if we come to offer a great thanksgiving with all possible praise to God, this means not just words, but the act of self-offering to a risen Lord, who has already sought out His people at every Eucharist in the Word. We don't sufficiently draw attention to this self-giving at the end of the Eucharistic prayer "And here we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice; through Jesus Christ our Lord: Amen."

Who goes over the Liturgy of the Eucharist with their Kirk Session and leaders? Yet this is really the most urgent call to the Kirk. If the leaders of our congregations do not understand the basic elements of the central service instituted by Christ, can we really be surprised if the members are falling away? Our people must be helped to understand the essential meaning of the Sacrament as a great joyful festival of thanksgiving to God in which there is a meeting with Christ risen from the dead, and that this meeting means a dying to self and a rising to newness of life in the same Christ. But if the dying to self takes place as we offer ourselves, corporately and individually, at the end of the Eucharistic prayer, where does the rising again take place? I tell my people that this takes place, by the grace of Christ and in the power of the Spirit, when He lifts up each communicant into His risen life, as they reach out their hands for the bread and wine, and receive Christ, His Body and Blood, His very Self into their souls. For who can follow Christ? We all need His grace and strength for this high calling - so it is the most natural thing for Christians to hold out empty hands for the bread and wine of our Lord's own institution, for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Thus are we made members afresh of His mystical holy Body, thus are we bound again to our gracious living Lord, committed to praying to the Father in Him, committed to cherishing our Christian brother and sister in Him, and committed to a life of witness and service in the world in Him.

In my own way I have been trying to speak about the paschal mystery in which by grace we share, but we have to understand that this is in Christ before it is through Christ in the Sacrament. "The Mystery of the Eucharist is not any mystery of the Eucharist itself, but the paschal mystery of Christ which he set forth in the Eucharist for the participation of all who believe in Him." 19 This paschal mystery has two sides to it: a descending and ascending movement,

both katabasis and anabasis - "The movement of saving love which is at once from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit, and to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit. This has already taken place once for all in the self-giving of God to us through the incarnation of His Son, and in the self-offering of Jesus Christ through his ascension to the Father". 20

In the descending movement of God's amazing love in Christ there is a descending into the depths of humanity's suffering and into death itself. It is this handing over of life, even to death that we are asked to share in the Sacrament. This is the movement of self-offering which is found in symbol in the offertory procession, but is found in words at the end of the Great Prayer. It is in this way that members of the Church, corporately and individually, are asked to share through the Spirit in our Lord's consecration, in the stroking out of self to death itself; we must bring in our worldly selves - all that we do in the working hours, in the home and in our leisure hours. Our Eucharistic offering has rightly been called "The thrust of the secular into the very heart of the sacred." "Into that loaf of bread goes the whole working life of the world, all the complicated process of production, distribution and exchange. And in that bottle of wine we have the symbol of life's joy and leisure, everything to make glad and free the heart of man. All that we take, as it were, off the table of our daily lives, and we place it in the hands of Christ for him to transform and use. In the bread and wine we bring, is handed over to God all we are, everything he has made us, and everything we have made ourselves. As the offertory goes up we say in effect: There you are, God -- take it and use it for the extension of your reign, here and to the end of the earth". 21

But there is also in the Last Supper, an anabasis, an ascent for the faithful communicant, corresponding to our Lord's ascent. As we partake at the Table, we are lifted up into sharing in the glorified humanity of Christ, into sharing in the life of heaven. We have part in the wonderful love of Christ for the Father and for man alike, and we are made very members incorporate within the mystical Body of the Lord. It is true that the anabasis of the communicant in Christ is not very well spelt out in the Sacrament as we know it. "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 that 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". 22 But what are

we to do in practice about this? It is possible to use - post-communion - as Professor Torrance suggests - the reading of St John 10 v 19-23 and the prayers that follow as in the 1962 Ordinal and Service Book. Otherwise we must explain to our people that in receiving the bread and wine, by faith in Christ, they

are being lifted up into His life which is His risen and ascended life, His glorified humanity lived out in continuing intercession and worship before the Father's throne, and which is at the same time a life of witness to the Holy Trinity in this world.

IV THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF THE SACRAMENT FOR THE FUTURE

This dying and rising again, this katabasis and anabasis, which must always be seen as being in Christ before it is through Christ in the Eucharist, is at the very heart of our Christian Faith and Life. It continually re-shapes and renews the communicant on his pilgrim way, for he celebrates the Eucharist Liturgy until He comes. But this paschal mystery, at the centre of every true Eucharist, does more, for it has a future reference to each congregation and parish, and to the wider world, taking away their divisions, and re-constituting the community, and changing the nature of history and of our common life. The supreme revolutionary action of Christ for the Church of Scotland does not lie usually in any General Assembly report or debate, however carefully framed or however stimulating - it lies where our Lord meant it to lie, in what He has commanded, the proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, especially in the Sacrament. For that is essentially where the liturgy of the people takes place, where something is not just heard or seen, but where something is done, each member giving himself or herself wholly to the risen Lord, and where He gives Himself in amazing grace.

This powerful changing of the future can take place even through one man or woman's true participation in "The Meal for the Life of the World". Let us go back to St Magnus again. Through this one man's whispered dedication to his Lord - no doubt often repeated - through his stretching out on many occasions empty hands for the signs of Christ's life, the web of the history of Orkney trembled, the riven and split coat of state became whole again. Listen to these powerful words: "The actions of Everyman, once the bread of divine wisdom is in his body, have an immense importance. What he does and says reverberates through the whole web of time. Men not yet born will be changed either for good or ill by his speech and the things that his hands find to do (as seapink and star tremble to one another's motions). A man can therefore direct his purified will into the future for the alleviation of the pain of the future -- The man whispered and the whole web of history trembled".²³ In that little church in Egilsay at the Easter Mass, Earl Magnus whispered his self-offering even to death to his risen Lord, receiving the broken bread and the poured out cup - Christ's sacrificial life - and the web of history trembled. Through the dedication of

this one martyr, the fighting and the burning and the hatred in Orkney ceased, and the light of peace and good order began to shine there and far beyond Orkney's shores.

There is then, a great price to be paid for this transformation of life focussed in the Eucharist, and wrought out in the cherishing of the people and in service to the world - the price of self-giving and pain and even death itself. So we come back to the royal priesthood of Christ, for it was no external offering He made; it was the perfect offering and sacrifice of Himself, which has royal kingly power in it to change and transform situations and people. And the wonder is that we are to share in this royal priesthood, in self oblation even to death, and at the same time, in Christ's transforming power, to share indeed in His Cross, for this is "the forge and threshing floor and the shed of the net makers where God and man work out together a plan of utter necessity and of unimaginable beauty". And it is the ministers who have to lead the way in this costly self-offering for they are in the holy ministry, they are servants handed over to the Holy One, even Christ. "Ministry in the Church is essentially a pastoral function, the mission and actions of a shepherd. The pastor is the minister the sign and instrument of the unique shepherd. He can lead with authority, those who are entrusted to him, only if he sacrifices himself for them, if he gives his life for those he loves; he can only be the minister of Christ the shepherd if he knows the faithful with love, if he knows each one by name in a communion of life, joy and suffering; he can only be the minister of Christ the King if his authority is based on the word of God, for the sheep of the flock know only the voice of Christ the Good Shepherd ---. He can only be the minister of the Lord of the whole Church if he leads his flock out of the fold to take them into the world where the other sheep will join him, thanks to the universal mission of Christ, the Good Shepherd of all mankind".²⁴ Such ministry is impossible without the continual help of our great High Priest.

It will of course be said, that there is not much evidence of this transformation of life and of such revolutionary action in the ordinary congregation or parish; the hearts of ministers, elders and members are far too stony. I may be allowed here a personal reference. One day I was on the Orcadian Island of Rousay and fished one of its hill lochs. We had lunch by the shore. One of my companions picked up a stone, and turning it over, showed us the life underneath, all kinds of insects and flies. He flung it into the loch, and almost at once the fish were having a meal. We may feel sometimes that in our congregations, large or small,

we are walking amongst stony hearts, but let the living stones be turned over by the power of the Word and Sacrament, then by the grace of Christ, life will be revealed, relationships changed, the secret of the Kingdom made incarnate, history altered and spiritual food provided for others -

Not where the wheeling systems darken
And our benumbed conceiving soars!
The drift of pinions we would hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.
The angels keep their ancient places,
Turn but a stone and start a wing!
Tis ye, tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing. 25

1. A Calendar of Love - G M Brown - p 71.
2. Ibid - G M Brown - pp 70 and 71.
3. Liturgy Coming to Life - J A T Robinson - p 65.
4. C.H.3. Hymn 420
5. Against the Stream - K Barth - p 67.
6. The Living Fountain - R S Wallace - p 22.
7. Calvin's Commentaries - Hebrew 9 v 22; St John 14 v 1 - Quoted by Wallace - Ibid - p 24.
8. The Holy Eucharist - Rev J B Craven - p 77.
9. Quoted in C.S.S.A. May 77 by D M Murray, from Sprott - Euchologion - p 21, note 2.
10. Worship - von Allmen - p 133.
11. Ibid - Von Allmen - p 133.
12. Encounter with God - Forrester/McDonald/Tellini - p 73 and p 74
13. The King Comes - J W Leitch - p 19.
14. Concerning Worship - W D Maxwell - p 38.
15. The Gospel and The Catholic Church - Ramsay - p 30.
16. In Remembrance of Me - C.S.S.A. - Rev Prof J K S Reid DD - May 1960.
17. Evening Celebration of Holy Communion - W D Maxwell - C.S.S.A. pp 12 & 13, May, 1947.
18. G F MacLeod - Only One Way Left - pp 102 & 103.
19. Theology in Reconciliation - T F Torrance p 106.
20. Ibid - T F Torrance - p 118.
21. Liturgy Coming to Life - J A T Robinson - p 68.
22. The C.S.S.R. No. 5 1983 pp 17 & 18 - Comments by the Very Rev T F Torrance.
23. Magnus - G M Brown - p 141.
24. Priesthood and Ministry - M Thurman - p 29.
25. The Kingdom of God - Francis Thompson.