

Notes and Comments *

MEMBERS of the Society will have learned, with very real pleasure, that the University of Glasgow, at the forthcoming summer graduation, is to honour our retiring President, the Rev. Dr. William D. Maxwell, of Whitekirk, with its Doctorate in Divinity. This is a well-deserved honour, and we extend our warmest congratulations. Dr. Maxwell is one of our leading liturgiologists, and has made a distinctive contribution in this department of theological study. He is held in high esteem not only in our own Church, but far beyond its borders, and in the Ecumenical field has gained increasing recognition for his researches in this subject. Recently he represented the Church of Scotland at a Conference in Essex, where a Commission met to prepare material for the Third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund, in Sweden, this summer. At that gathering, convened to consider the forms and traditions of worship in all the non-Roman Churches, there were delegates of eminence from many lands. The papers read have been published in a volume entitled *Ways of Worship*, reviewed in these pages. Dr. Maxwell was one of the contributors to that volume, and a Joint Editor.

Freedom to do what we like in the conduct of the services of the Church is, perhaps, a cherished privilege of ministers, and not a few are persuaded that they can 'improve' on forms of service authorized by the General Assembly in the *Book of Common Order*. Sometimes, however, our attempts in this direction are not quite so felicitous as we should like to think. In conducting the Marriage Service, for example, there is, in some quarters, considerable variety. One does not claim that the present service is perfect in every respect ; but in the practice of most ministers it has proved adequate, and the people grow accustomed to its words and actions. So much so that when, as sometimes happens, a novel departure is made, they notice the novelty, and are not slow to express their preference for the forms which are becoming an accepted tradition. We should beware lest liberty degenerate into licence.

* Contributed by various members.

Some, no doubt, who feel they have the genius to compose them or the duty to preach them, will insist upon the inclusion of a 'Children's Sermon' in the service. But a sermon to the children, if it must be given, need not be made the disturbing interruption it often becomes, when it is simply 'stuck into' the service,—for no other word describes the depressing and irrational method of insertion often employed. You find children's sermons interrupting the natural flow of devotion by popping up in the oddest places ; for example, between the Lessons from Holy Scripture (Is it a canon of the Scottish Church that a child must never hear passages read from the New Testament ?) ; or after the opening psalm or hymn (Is this all the children can be asked to bear of adult worship ?) ; or after the opening Call to Prayer. So it goes on : the places selected for the intrusion of children's sermons is even stranger than some of the sermons themselves ! What is the governing principle of those who thus deface the public worship of God in this irresponsible fashion ? Is it because the children must be allowed to escape as quickly as possible to the Sunday School ? If so, it should be remembered that the Sunday School is secondary to the Church service, and if abbreviation or interruption is necessary it should be done in the Sunday School, and not in the Church. Or is it because such ministers think the children cannot 'take in' much of the adult service ? Perhaps they cannot, though their capacity in this respect may be greater than some imagine ; but they love to worship in God's house, and they should not be deprived of the opportunity. Let the little ones remain, at least until after the Lessons from Holy Scripture are read, or better still, until just before the Sermon is preached. And when they retire, if they do retire, let them go out during the last verse of a hymn so that no break occurs in the service. It is time we returned to sense and sanity in this regard.

The seemingly custom of receiving the Offerings of the people in church at the Holy Table is, fortunately, becoming more usual. In many places, however, where collection plates are used, the plates are assembled in an 'impressive' row upon the Table, while the prayer of dedication is said. A much better practice is for the Offerings to be received in bags on an Alms Dish by the Minister and placed upon the Table. Some argue that, where the envelope system is in

operation, bags cannot accommodate the envelopes conveniently. Surely that difficulty could be overcome by having bags with a larger aperture and of greater capacity, and by multiplying the number in use. The difficulty appears to be trifling and could, with a little thought, be easily overcome.

The maintenance of Church Choirs is becoming an acute problem in many parishes. Social habits have changed considerably in the past decade, and it is becoming difficult in many places to find time even for a choir practice, let alone to secure a decent turnout of the choir on Sunday. The extensive development of evening classes in Further Education, and the multiplication of organized forms of recreation, demand an increasing share of the interest and time of the youth of both sexes. In villages and smaller towns it might be possible to arrange a special class for choral singing under the auspices of the Education Authorities, built around the nucleus of the church choir. Another possibility is the organizing of Junior Choirs of both sexes. It would be an encouragement to the young to be given a special responsibility in this regard, and the interest thus created might bear fruit in later years.

Recently, in pursuance of our policy of affording members of the Society an opportunity to discuss matters of common interest, a One-day Conference was held at the Kirk of the Greyfriars, in Edinburgh, for those within convenient reach of the city. The conference was fairly well attended, and the discussions centred around the subject of 'Worship and the Arts'. In the morning, following upon the celebration of Holy Communion in Lady Yester's Aisle, the Rev. James Chisholm, M.A., of the Church Art Centre, gave a stimulating paper on this subject which he has made his own. In the afternoon Mr Ian G. Lindsay, F.R.I.B.A., of Uphall, an outstanding authority on his subject, gave a most informative address on the principles of church architecture. The conference was very well worth while. As a Society we should do something more than simply publish the *Annual*; and such gatherings, on a regional basis, provide a most useful forum for discussion of the objects we all have at heart. Similar meetings might well be held in other parts of Scotland, where our membership is strong enough to take the lead.