

CHURCH SERVICE SOCIETY NOTES

Regional Conference

The autumn Conference was held in Edinburgh at the Kirk of the Greyfriars last October, when the Society heard, for the first time, a paper by a Roman Catholic liturgical scholar. Such a development, it should be noted, is entirely in line with the constitutional aim of the Society . . . 'to study the liturgies – ancient and modern – of the Christian Church . . . to encourage order, reverence, beauty, and reality in worship.'

Father John Symon of St. Andrew's College, Drygrange, took as his rather intriguing title, 'Is it still the same Mass?' He left us in no doubt about the radical nature of the liturgical developments in the Roman Church since 1963 . . . 'the most striking change ever achieved by one branch of Christendom – since the first Century – while still keeping complete continuity of faith and order.' The catalogue, in brief, of the main items of the reformation was impressive – the Liturgy in English (almost impossible to find a Latin Mass nowadays); the westwards position at the Altar; increased congregational participation, in the use of laymen as readers, in the singing of hymns and psalms, in the prayer of the faithful, in the number communicating (the average Scottish R.C. communicates monthly); more flexibility in the rite itself; the development of the Sermon as one of the basic elements of the Liturgy.

The theological implications were not to be overlooked; the understanding of the Sacraments as signs of faith; more prominence in the new Mass on the unique sacrifice of Calvary and on the Risen Christ; a move away from too much emphasis on trans-substantiation although that doctrine is affirmed; the influence of the vernacular in the changing role of the ordained minister, who is seen not as separate from the rest of the people of God, but as one commissioned with special functions within the whole people of God; the significant fact that the revised Mass is based on the Word of God.

The subject was in Dialogue form, and in the Response, the Rev. John Heron, Vice-President of the Society, welcomed the emphasis on faith in the new Liturgy, while drawing attention to the danger of over-emphasising the place of faith rather than the personal grace of God. On trans-substantiation, he saw Reformed teaching as, in some ways, very close to the new Roman ideas, as long as 'substance' could be forgotten and stress laid on the living Christ giving us Himself. Another notable bridging of the gap was in the departure from the crude mechanical notions of the sacrifice of the Mass and the

re-discovery of the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ.

In the lively discussion at the afternoon session, it seemed, at times, that the theologians had predominance over the liturgiologists in that the themes of trans-substantiation and sacrifice kept recurring. To one observer at least, the occasion was not without piquancy – a Protestant warning on a Roman slide to Anabaptism in the theology of the sacraments – a Reformed claim that in the Epiclesis there is a deeper concept of the Real Presence of Christ than in the doctrine of trans-substantiation – a Roman assertion that the Eucharist is not complete without the preaching of the Word, on all occasions – to the confusion of the Protestants!

Professor Torrance, the President, presided, and at the outset celebrated Holy Communion. There was an attendance of 25 members and friends, all much appreciative of the excellent facilities and hospitality of Kirk House, where the good fellowship of a stimulating and interesting day was shared, not least by our guest, who showed himself as one well informed about the traditions and ethos of the Church of Scotland, and with sympathetic understanding of its point of view.

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On 18 October 1971, the Society will visit the lovely Perthshire country church of Caputh, to hear a paper by Dr. F. R. Stevenson, A.R.I.B.A., Edinburgh, on 'Liturgy and Architecture, with special reference to Scandinavia', illustrated with slides. We hope that members will now make a note of this forthcoming Conference. Details will be sent, in due course, to those within a radius of twenty miles, and to any others who notify the Hon. Secretary of their interest.

Centenary Lectureship

It is most gratifying to record that the plans laid at the Centenary of the Society in 1965 for the establishment of a lectureship in worship, have now come to fruition. Thanks to the donations of members and the generosity of one friend of the Society in particular, the lectureship has now been financed and instituted. Its purpose is to promote scholarship in the realm of worship, and the funds available should provide, in normal circumstances, for the appointment of a lecturer each alternate year.

The inaugural lecture was given at New College, Edinburgh, on 26 October, before a large audience, by the distinguished Swiss liturgical scholar, Professor J.J. von Allmen, of the University of Neuchâtel, on 'The Theological Meanings of a Christian Wedding

Ceremony'. Professor Torrance presided. Following the lecture there was a full discussion, and a memorable afternoon concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Ian Moir.

Annual Meeting

About 45 members and friends were present at the Annual Meeting, held at New College, Edinburgh, on 22 May, 1970. After tea, the meeting was constituted by the President, the Rev. G. Rendle Leatham, B.D.

Members rose to receive the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Reverend Hugh O. Douglas, D.D., who briefly addressed the meeting, referring to his interest for many years in the Society and all it stood for, and the developments in worship throughout the time of his own ministry.

Tribute was paid to the memory of Dr. Charles L. Warr, the Senior Honorary President, to his abiding interest in the Society, and to the liturgical traditions established during his notable ministry at St. Giles'.

It was unanimously resolved to authorise the Council to enter into agreement with the Scottish Academic Press, Ltd., whereby the Press take over the production, promotion and distribution of the Society's journal, Editorial rights being reserved to the Society. The new arrangement involves a change of name for the *Annual*, and the production of two issues in the year will necessitate a revised subscription rate.

Mr. Leatham's Presidential Address on 'Precarious Balances in Public Worship' was well received, and, on the motion of Dr. Keir, accorded a hearty vote of thanks.

The circulation of the *Annual* was reported as 1093, and the Treasurer's statement showed a satisfactory credit balance in the General Fund. The Centenary Fund capital, now invested, is producing an annual interest of approximately £50.

The Rev. Professor T. F. Torrance, New College, was unanimously elected as President for the ensuing two years, and the Rev. John Heron, Stevenston, as Vice-President. The Secretary and Treasurer were continued in office, and the Council re-elected, with the addition of the Rev. A. Stewart Todd, Aberdeen.