

EDITORIAL

It has generally been assumed that the settlement of the 1929 Union left the Church of Scotland in the position of being mistress of her own affairs in matters of doctrine and worship, but there were certain rumblings brought out in the debate on the return to overtures concerning the Declaratory Articles which makes one wonder whether the battle is really over. How free is the church which cannot regulate her own worship and the statements of her beliefs without risking that complaints may be upheld by the civil courts?

There is perhaps need for a test case to give the civil courts the opportunity to decline jurisdiction so that we really know where the matter stands.

That the Church must keep its links with its historical origins is clear or it could soon repeat all the extravagances of early Gnosticism, but it is also unthinkable that the Church should find itself strangled by any formulation which was time-conditioned by the needs and problems of a past generation, but is largely irrelevant to the needs of the Church today. The Church needs a living tradition to interpret a living word to its own people and to those to whom it seeks to speak. Judaism has long appreciated the need to renovate its way of life and tradition. The Christianity that would try to exist with less is on the high road to impoverishment and stagnation. — *Mê genoito.*

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The High Kirk of Edinburgh is not alone in being the resting place for military colours no longer in use. If one accepts the practice, there are still questions of order and decency involved. It can hardly be said that the tattered rags presently hanging in the nave (and elsewhere) improve the appearance of the building. Far to the contrary when the sunlight comes in through the west window. If restoration is unfitting and impossible in such cases should there not be some agreement with the depositing body that after say two generations the relic will be laid up in a suitable national vault set aside for the purpose? Historic though they may be, tattered banners have no more right to lodgement in a place of worship than tattered vestments or tattered hymnbooks. We need to look again!

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In May 1974 the ruins of Melrose Abbey were the scene of a 'Service of Reconciliation'. This service was interdenominational and included both Roman Catholics and Protestants. At the close there was a 'Handshake of Peace' followed by a Blessing which was pronounced by all the clergy present.