

EDITORIAL

In the new-look committee structure of the General Assembly, Public Worship has successfully survived the attempts which were made to subsume it under the general umbrella of 'Education' . It could also have been threatened, as an independent concern, from 'Home Mission' , through its link with the task of evangelism. But worship is essentially distinct both from education and evangelism, for in the best of all possible worlds it would be offered only by the successfully evangelized and the theologically and liturgically educated.

We live, however, in the world of reality, and must accept that there are always going to be, in any normal congregation, those whose personal commitment to Jesus Christ is uncertain, or whose level of Christian education is inadequate. This is no argument for letting worship be taken over wholly by the evangelist or the educator, but, granted the fact that the hour of worship on a Sunday morning is, in many cases, the only opportunity many people give us of presenting to them the claims of the Gospel and the teachings of the Faith, these vital concerns must be given their due place within the context of worship, even if, in the view of some purists, this would be considered an intrusion.

It is unthinkable that the Apostle Paul ("Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!") would have ignored the presence and needs of the uncommitted in a worship context, or that he would have wished to divorce the activities of learning and devotion. Paul was a realist, as we too must be. The authors of the URGENT CALL TO THE KIRK are, therefore, entirely justified when they stress that "mission and evangelism must be given priority and a controlling place in all the worship, life and activity of the Kirk." This emphasis has not pleased some, but what value is there in worship, impeccable in its objectivity and purity, but void of an explicitly evangelistic or educational content, if it be offered in a context where there is "erosion of fundamental belief" or where men and women are "seriously ignorant of the Christian Faith" ? If we are too hasty in our desire to replicate heaven on earth, we shall betray the many souls who come to church with the earnest cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' And we shall betray also those who, while having responded fully in faith and obedience to Christ, are desperately seeking guidance as to what they should believe and how they should live.

The URGENT CALL insists that the "hungry sheep look up and not fed." This assertion has stung many, but if the cap fits it must be worn. Dare we, especially in our worship, neglect the needs of those who seek the One whom they do not yet know, or who long to know better the One in whom already they believe? May our worship always be what the authors of the URGENT CALL say of their own effort: "unashamedly evangelical" in emphasis. We must always be prepared to commend our Saviour to people wherever we find them, and if they are to be found sitting in the pews of our churches on a Sunday morning, then all the theological and liturgical considerations conceivable could not relieve us of our responsibility to be to them ministers of Christ.

We apologize to our members and readers for the late appearance of this issue. The completed type-scripts were lost in transit between the Editor and the Printer, and some time elapsed before the loss became apparent. It has been necessary hastily to re-type some material from the original manuscripts, and to substitute some material which would have appeared in the issue after this one. Fortunately no contributions have been lost, the originals all having been preserved, and all shall appear in due course.

The members of our Society are very saddened to learn of the death of the Rev Ian G Forbes, MA on 26 November, 1983. Ian combined strong evangelical convictions with a passionate love of well-ordered worship, and had a particular interest in church music. He left his last charge, Mallaig, in 1979, and had since then been leading a very active retirement in Edinburgh. He had been due to conduct Morning Worship for our Editor the Sunday immediately following his sudden passing.

It is hoped that Issue number 7 will appear before too long. The Editor is anxious to receive fresh material for the subsequent issues. There would appear to be a marked reluctance on the part of our members to submit original prayer material, either for general use or for specific occasions. Is this because they are culling from books all the time, because of a widespread revival of extemporary prayer, or because they are terrified of what others will make of their efforts? It is hoped that this gap will be amply filled.