

Notes and Comments

IN several Presbyteries it has of recent years become the practice to omit the sermon at services of Ordination and Induction on the ground that two "sermons" prolong the service unduly and that the charges to Minister and Congregation are the true preaching of the Word on such occasions. Though the multiplicity of addresses at any service is not to be encouraged, it is doubtful whether this innovation is the best way to get over the difficulty. Not only is it a break with what has been the established liturgical tradition of the Church of Scotland for the past four centuries, but it is also open to the graver criticism that it tends to perpetuate wrong views on what constitutes a charge.

A charge is not advice tendered by an older man to his junior (or, as it sometimes happens, advice tendered with profuse apologies by a younger man to his senior), or a speech of congratulation to Minister and congregation on a happy occasion, or a lecture on pastoral theology, or a sermon on the nature of the Church and the responsibilities of churchmanship. Yet most so-called charges we have heard either fall into one or other of these categories or combine several of these themes. Though often admirably done such addresses do not fulfil the requirements of a charge and too often prove an anti-climax to the solemn act of Ordination and Induction. Whatever is said or left unsaid a charge should always be an authoritative word from one who speaks as the representative of the Church Universal as he hands over a divine commission to service in the Church Universal.

Our suggestion is that the sermon be retained in its historic place before the act of Ordination or Induction and that the Church should authorise the preparation of charges to be read by the Moderator of Presbytery or the presiding Presbyter to Minister and People. This has been done most successfully in the service for the Ordination and Admission of Elders in the *Book of Common Order*, where the charges are based on the Form approved by the General Assembly in 1580, which this Society restored to use in *Euchologion*. For the Ordination and Induction of Ministers

there are similar valuable guides in the service-books of the Reformation, brief, adequate and scriptural, all that charges should be.

Dr William D. Maxwell in his *John Knox's Genevan Service Book* 1556 (pp. 171 ff.) quotes from the Middelburg edition of the *Forme of Prayers*, 1602, "where for the first time a Puritan Ordinal appears in full", and we suggest that the charges there are an admirable model:—

"YOU, therefore, well-beloved Brother and Fellow-Minister in Christ, take heed unto yourself, and unto all the flock, whereof the Holy Ghost hath made you overseer, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Love Christ, and feed his sheep: having a care of them, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; not as though you were lord over the people committed unto you, but as being become a father unto the flock. Be an ensample unto them that believe, in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in pureness. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine; and neglect not the gift that is given you. Exercise these things, and give yourself wholly unto them, that it may be seen how you do profit among all men. Take heed unto learning, and continue therein. Bear patiently all gainsaying and reproach, as a good soldier of Christ. Doing this, you shall save yourself, and those that hear you: and when the chief Pastor shall appear, you shall receive the incorruptible crown of glory.

"You, likewise, dear Brethren, receive this your Minister in the Lord with all joy, and make much of such. Think that God himself doth speak by them unto you, and pray you. Embrace the word which he (according to the scripture) is to deliver; and that, not as any man's word, but, as it is indeed, the word of God. Let the feet of them that publish peace, and declare good things, be beautiful and acceptable unto you. Obey them that have the oversight of you; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you. By doing so, the peace of God shall enter into your houses; and you, receiving this man in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet; and by his word, believing in Christ, shall inherit life everlasting. Notwithstanding, seeing that no man is fit to any of all these things of himself, let us call unto God with thanksgiving in this manner: 'O Merciful Father, we thank Thee . . .'"

The charges given in *Euchologion* consist of material drawn from similar sources and require but little revision before they could be put into use. If this were done, the services of Ordination and Induction would have a dignity and impressiveness that meantime are too often absent.

A lay member of the Society, having read in a recent number of the *Annual* Dr. MacMillan's interesting article on Lecterns, has been reflecting on the curious circumstance that, while in an increasing number of churches a lectern occupies a position of some prominence, in many of them it appears to be rarely used. Its use, in fact, seems to be confined to occasions when an assisting minister takes part in the service.

This, he observes, is rather odd. It is not in harmony with our Scottish tradition to indulge in ornamentation for its own sake. There is, no doubt, some value in having a lectern, bearing a Bible, a visible reminder to worshippers that the Word of God is open, and accessible to all. It would, however, be of still greater advantage if this piece of furniture, often designed and executed with taste and skill, were regularly used for its clearly intended purpose, and not allowed to remain simply as a hallowed symbol.

Where there is a chancel, with space for the minister to move freely from one point to another, there is no difficulty. In plainer churches there appears to be a curious reluctance to use the lectern, possibly because it involves "coming down" from the pulpit. It should not be unduly difficult for the minister to do so during the singing of a hymn; to read the lessons from the lectern (remaining there during the intervening act of praise) and then to return to the pulpit.

Movement in itself, our correspondent suggests, ought not to be an unwelcome relief for the occupant of the pulpit, and it also has some psychological value for the congregation. At all events the lectern has, presumably, been installed and dedicated for a special purpose, viz., the public reading of Holy Scripture; and it is not asking too much that some attempt should be made to use it regularly for that purpose.

We understand that the General Assembly's Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion (with the assistance of representatives of the Committee on the Religious Instruction of Youth) has completed the preparation of a

Service Book for the Young, for use in Sunday Schools and at children's services.

The book provides a variety of services for each department of a fully graded school ; and also for uniform schools, in which all children, above the primary stage, worship together. The latter services are also intended for use at children's services in church. Special services are also provided for the chief Festivals of the Christian Year, and for missionary occasions.

The aim throughout has been to secure that the lesson or address is given as part of a complete act of corporate worship, no essential element being omitted. To enable the young to take an active part in the offering of worship full use is made of the responsive method.

The use of prose psalms and canticles, either chanted or read responsively, is encouraged ; and a valuable appendix contains classified lists of hymns, metrical psalms and paraphrases, indicating the point in the service where they may be appropriately sung, and their relevance to the various seasons of the Christian Year.

Members of this Society will, we are sure, welcome this publication, which will meet a long-felt need. Publishing houses, unfortunately, are faced with immense difficulties in these days, and we are warned that it may be some considerable time before the book makes its appearance.

It may be of interest to recall that the Society published, in 1917, a book of Children's Services, under the editorship of Professor James Cooper.