

Notes and Comments

HAS the time not now come when the decadent and unseemly practice of ministers appearing unrobed at their inductions, and probationers at their ordinations, should be abandoned? The practice, of course, derives from a period when robes were by no means universally worn; and it has continued, no doubt, because it was considered genteel and courteous to be unrobed until new robes were presented at the induction soirée. So the chief principle was submerged in a mush of coy gentility. Is a minister unfrocked before each induction? Has a probationer no right to his preaching gown because he has not been ordained? Then why give that impression to all who behold it? On so momentous an occasion as his induction a minister should surely be properly robed; and this applies equally to a probationer at his ordination. If a probationer does not possess robes, then let him borrow them; that presents no difficulty. And if a minister's robes are threadbare, the new ones will present a pleasant contrast with the old. A minister should, of course, be fully robed (not half-clothed in a cassock!) in cassock, girdle, bands, gown, hood and scarf. A probationer should appear without bands and scarf, unless the scarf be of stuff, and not silk. And it should be added that students when licensed should at least present themselves in gowns. There is no precedent in Christendom for ministers at inductions or ordinands at ordinations presenting themselves unrobed. Our present practice is uncatholic, unseemly and wholly discreditable.

Is it really necessary for the words "Church of Scotland" to appear at the head of nearly every circular, appeal, notice or advertisement put forth by the courts, committees and organisations of the Church? Overseas it may be necessary, but here in Scotland itself when reference is made to the "Synod of X" or the "Presbytery of Y" surely that is descriptive enough. If we belonged to the First-Church of Christ Scientist, or to the Church of the Latter Day Saints, it might be just as well to put that in just to make our position clear; but if we really *are* the Church of

Scotland, do we have to assert the claim afresh every time a circular is sent out? It is unnecessary enough with regard to notices in the *Scottish Press*; but doubly so in communications, say, from a presbytery to its own members. We don't have to be reminded every month that we are not Buddhists or Moslems, or even Anglicans or Baptists. In England you would never see a notice beginning: "Church of England—Diocese of York", because the latter sufficiently indicates the former. And even in Scotland,—significantly enough,—you never see a notice beginning: "Episcopal Church in Scotland—Diocese of Edinburgh". It is simply "Diocese of Edinburgh". Why should it be we who thus descend into denominationalism?

In the last issue of the *Annual* Dr. Nevile Davidson made a persuasive appeal for the restoration of the Creeds to regular use in the worship of our Church. A few suggestions might be made as to how this can be done without arousing the prejudices of a congregation. It should be noted that in the *Service Book for the Young* the use of the Apostles' Creed is recommended for use in the higher grades of the Sunday School, and at children's services. A beginning might usefully be made there. Some ministers have found the use of a simplified form of the Creed, suitable to the young, preferable; but this is to be deprecated. There is really no reason why the Apostles' Creed should not be used, with some simple instruction as to why we use it. In the worship offered in Bible Class and in Youth groups it comes most appropriately, with more advanced instruction as to its meaning. And surely in the class for Confirmation it is most desirable that some time should be given to its exposition. A tradition is easily formed, and in a comparatively brief time a generation will grow up in any parish where the recitation of the Creed, as an expression of the Faith of the Church, will be valued.

At the celebration of Holy Communion, the service of Confirmation, and at the administration of Holy Baptism the use of one or other of the Creeds is recommended in the *Book of Common Order*. It also seems most appropriate that the Apostles' Creed should be said at the great Festivals of the Christian Year, as emphasizing the particular aspect of the Faith specially commemorated on that day. It might also be said on appointed days of National significance.

It is wise to intimate, *before* the reading of the Gospel that thereafter the Creed will be said, as an expression of

our common faith, and if reference is made to the *Church Hymnary* for the words, prejudice is somewhat allayed. There can scarcely be any objection to using what appears in that official manual, issued by authority. And the people can be called to their feet by the simple bidding: "I believe". It would seem but a little step to proceed from such occasional use to the regular recitation of the Creed in the ordinary services of the Church, if the way is thus carefully prepared and with sound reasons given to the congregation for the restoration of this act to our worship.

Doubtless the time is approaching when a revision of the *Church Hymnary* will be undertaken to examine carefully the existing contents of that book, to omit what has proved, in the practice of the Church, to be unsingable or unsuitable for congregational use, and to include new material which has become available since the last revision. An interested layman has suggested that it is most important for the experts to consider carefully why certain tunes have quickly and universally commended themselves in experience, whilst others for some reason have not "caught on". There must, he adds, be some technical reason for this. There is no doubt that many of the hymns of a former day should go, as far as words are concerned. On the other hand this process of rejection might go too far. And in the matter of music difficult, complicated settings should be avoided in a book intended for congregational use. It would be better, he suggests, to have a special section recommended for use by choirs as simple anthems, and these might be preferable to some of the compositions to which choirs are accustomed to give such diligent attention. The Reformation in Europe was ushered in on wings of song,—the hymns of Luther in Germany and the Psalms in lands where Calvin's influence prevailed. And the Wesleyan Revival is a classic instance of how religious faith sings itself into the hearts and minds of a people. It would be great gain in Scotland if we could devise some more effective means to "let the people sing". In the average parish church it is much more important to encourage congregations to fulfil their responsibility in this regard than it is to embellish our worship with anthems, indifferently rendered by meagrely trained choirs of only moderate competence.

We have been interested to note, in recent years, that at the daily devotions of the General Assembly the *Gloria* is

regularly sung at the conclusion of the metrical psalm, thus reviving what was once the universal practice in Scotland. So far as one can gather only a few congregations retain this laudable practice of the Reformed Church in our land. More parishes might, with advantage, follow in this regard the lead given by the General Assembly, and recover in their worship this ancient and fitting custom.

For some obscure reason it is an almost universal custom in our churches for the minister to give out the number of a hymn or psalm, and then to read part, or indeed, the whole of the opening verse. Is this really necessary? Presumably the object in reading the opening words is to identify the hymn in the minds of the people, beyond a doubt. Is it not enough simply to give out the number clearly and distinctly, with one repetition, and leave it at that? Further, is it really necessary or edifying for the organist to play his way through, perhaps, a long verse of a hymn, before the people stand. A few bars should suffice, or even a chord. It would appear that in this matter we are simply the slaves of habit, or it may be that the practical reason is merely to afford the people ample time to look up the number.

Nearly half a century ago a "Society" existed in Dunfermline calling itself "The Anti-Romanising Church Service Society", which from time to time attacked the older and better known Society to which we belong. In an article which appeared in the *Dunfermline Press* on 7th July, 1949, part of a series termed "Editorial Memories", we find an interesting note on the composition of this society. Its president was the redoubtable Pastor Jacob Primmer, minister of the church, or rather "Chapel of Ease", at Townhill, and its secretary a "particularly tall gentleman". The pastor was rather diminutive and these two formed the whole of the "Society", as they did of a somewhat better known body called "The Dunfermline Protestant Defence Association". The "society" was thus described by a popular rhymer of those bygone days :

" In Dunfermline toon there lives a loon
Wha ca's himsel' a clan,
But truth to tell beside himsel'
It musters ane wee man."

In November last a regional One-Day Conference for members of the Society was held at St. Oswald's parish

church, Edinburgh, by courtesy of the minister and kirk session. The day began with the celebration of Holy Communion by the President of the Society, the Rev. Dr. Wm. D. Maxwell, of Whitekirk, after which a most instructive and challenging paper on Holy Baptism was given by the Rev. J. K. S. Reid, B.D., an acknowledged authority on the theology of that subject. After lunch the Rev. R. Stuart Loudon, B.D., read a provocative and searching paper on Confirmation. Both of these papers evoked a keen discussion, and we have pleasure in publishing in these pages the substance of Mr Loudon's paper, for a wider circle. The Conference was greatly appreciated by those present, numbering about thirty, and it is hoped to repeat the experiment at some future date.

At the Annual Meeting of the Society in May, 1950, approval was given to the urgent recommendation of the Council that the annual subscription be increased to four shillings. Since 1938 it has stood at two shillings and sixpence, but costs for paper and printing have risen so sharply since then that it is now quite impossible to maintain the *Annual* in its present form, and meet the other incidental expenses of our work, at the former rate. We have delayed taking this step as long as possible, but it is now quite inevitable. We sincerely trust that members will appreciate the blunt facts of the situation, and that they will continue their membership. The new rate—four shillings—operates for the current year, and it should be remembered that for this modest subscription members receive the *Annual* without any further charge.

The ordering of the financial affairs of the Society would be made much easier if members would make a special point of paying their subscriptions promptly, before the close of the financial year. The financial year ends at the Annual Meeting, in May, and a dispatch slip with the *Annual* indicates the Presbytery Correspondent to whom payment should be made. We admit there is usually little time to make this payment, but members would do well to get into the habit of handing their subscription to the local correspondent *in advance* of the receipt of the *Annual*, and without a formal request. In these days of financial stringency it is unfair to keep the publisher waiting for settlement of his account.