

THE RECORD

The Editor writes:

In his contribution to this issue of *The Record*, Tom Davidson Kelly quotes the egregious Dr A.K.H. Boyd, of St Andrews, preacher, essayist and cultivator of Anglican dignitaries. Writing in 1869, he stated that, 'It is well known to all who are interested in the Church of Scotland that for several years past there has existed a strong desire in many of her members and ministers, both for more solemn and decorous places of worship than have hitherto been common in this country, and likewise for greater propriety and dignity in the forms and arrangements of worship itself.' Four years earlier, awareness of that two-fold desire had led three young ministers to promote the formation of the Church Service Society.

Few might now describe the needs and desires of members and ministers of the Church in relation to her places and forms of worship in the same terms, but both are among the things perennially 'requiring to be reformed' (*reformanda*), even in the best reformed churches, if they are to be adequate vehicles for the Gospel in an ever-changing world. If, in its earlier days, the Society's corporate efforts were concentrated more on the forms than on places of worship, the latter have always had a place among concerns of many of its members, expressing itself in an overlap of membership with the interdenominational Scottish Ecclesiological Society. Tom Davidson Kelly explores this in meticulous detail and provides an impressive account of its fruits.

The membership of the Society has at times been accused, never with real justification, of discounting preaching. Let no one look for evidence in support of such an accusation in our second article. William Johnstone's paper for the Aberdeenshire Theological Club fascinated those who heard it, not least for the light which it shed on medieval biblical interpretation. That can hardly be held to be a matter altogether alien to preachers in an era of some dispute over the meaning and authority of scripture. If it be true that no pictorial glass survives in our churches from the era with which he deals, it may be noted that the revival of stained glass in Scottish parish churches, which is surely not without its own evangelical significance, dates from much the same era as our Society. Perhaps a reader would like to examine the use of the Bible by one or more of our most significant stained glass artists, or to attempt to provide theologically-based canons by which to judge proposed new works.

Our third contribution returns us to the field of forms of worship – with a purpose which could hardly have been envisaged by our Victorian forebears (though I am informed by a knowledgeable friend that medieval Orthodox material of this kind exists). In present circumstances, it is hardly to be expected that an Assembly Committee would feel able to provide models for services to be used on the occasion of the registering of civil partnerships. It is hoped that what Henry Sefton thoughtfully and carefully produced to meet a request to him to provide such a service may, with the attached note, be of assistance to others who find themselves in a like position.

J.C.S.

NOTED ELSEWHERE

Although the Scottish Ecclesiological Society went out of existence a generation ago, its counterpart south of the border, known, *more Anglico*, without prefix, as the Ecclesiological Society, appears, more recently, to have entered a period of renewed activity. Its journal, *Ecclesiology Today*, shares with *The Record* a somewhat erratic pattern of appearance but is now a pleasingly produced and well-illustrated publication which has recently included a fair number of items which may be of interest to our own constituency. We may instance Issue 34 (January 2005) which contains ‘The Organ, the Ambo and the Pulpitum, King’s College Chapel, Aberdeen’ by Jane Geddes, Lecturer in History of Art there, and ‘Nonconformist Churches in Canada 1850-75’ by Malcolm Thurlby, with a preponderance of references to Presbyterian Churches, as well as a picture and note on the ‘rather sad’ state of Strathbungo church in Glasgow. The most recent issue (36, June 2006) has an article by a recent Aberdeen graduate in History of Art on ‘The work of Sir John Ninian Comper: pastiche and valueless as an expression of contemporary art?’ Comper was born in Aberdeen and, although he worked mainly in England, he designed some notable ‘nonconformist’ (Episcopal) churches in Scotland.