

Kindred Movements in the Dominions.

I. VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

THE Church Service Society of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria was founded in 1925 by a small group of ministers who desired to encourage a richer and more adequate expression of corporate worship, and a clearer understanding of the doctrines of the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments. The publication some years before of a *Book of Common Order*⁽¹⁾, authorised by the General Assembly of Australia, encouraged them in their efforts. This book met a widely felt need and had already set a more worthy standard for the orderly celebration of the Sacraments and the conduct of the occasional offices of the Church. At the time of writing a Committee of the Australian General Assembly is engaged in a revision of this book, and the preparation of a companion volume to include Orders of Morning and Evening Worship and such special services as are proper to the chief festivals of the Christian Year. In this task the Committee is in touch with the Church of Scotland's Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion, whose publications are greatly valued and widely used.

The Society was completely re-organised in 1931 and adopted a new constitution. The aim of the Society is "to study the liturgies and service-books—ancient and modern—of the Christian Church; the Standards and Confessions of the Presbyterian Church; the Catholic and Apostolic heritage of the Reformed Church; the principles of Public Worship; and the arrangement and furnishing of the Sanctuary, with a view to the encouragement of an adequate, orderly and reverent expression of the corporate acts of Divine Worship". The Constitution was submitted to the General Assembly and received its cordial approval.

In the early years of the movement annual Retreats proved a fruitful means of study and research. A useful piece of work which exercised a wide influence and opened

⁽¹⁾ *Book of Common Order of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (The Sacraments and other Offices of the Church)*. Angus & Robertson, Ltd., Sydney, 1921.

the way to reform was the publication of a standard *Order of Morning Service*, with an exposition of the substance and sequence of the various acts of worship. In this and other ways the Society has made its influence felt, and many ministers who are not actual members are, nevertheless, giving more careful attention to these important matters.

The principles enunciated by the Society have secured a remarkable advance in church architecture, especially as regards internal arrangement and furnishing. Some years after the War, Scots Church, Melbourne, (the cathedral-church of Presbyterianism), took the lead in this matter, and under the direction of the Rev. William Borland, D.D., formerly of Dunbar, the beautiful apse was opened up. By the provision of a side-pulpit, ornately carved Holy Table and reredos, with elders' stalls, lectern and font, (in place of the old massive central pulpit), this dignified Gothic building is now a beautiful example of ecclesiastical art. Other churches were not slow to follow this inspiring lead. In the erection of new churches this arrangement is being generally adopted, a notable instance being St. Andrew's, Bendigo (1930), which followed in detail the latest design in favour in Scotland. Churches erected before the renaissance of worship set in are also being sensibly influenced, and congregations, conscious of the inadequacy of their furnishings, have provided generously for suitable interior alterations on sound and progressive lines. Much educative work still remains to be done, but a further notable achievement which will exercise a lasting influence upon the church design of the future is the Littlejohn Memorial Chapel at Scotch College, Melbourne, the largest public school in the Commonwealth and one of the finest educational foundations of our Church. The massive proportions of this Chapel, its chaste and simple dignity, and especially its beautiful East End will serve in years to come as a silent witness to the ministry of beauty in the worship of the Sanctuary, and will inspire generations of boys in their most impressionable years with the highest ideals of worship.

The membership of the Society is comparatively small, but its influence is out of all proportion to its numbers and is steadily growing. An indication of this is the fact that no less than six of the eight Moderators who have held office in the Church since the re-organisation of the Society are members. The *Annual* of the Scottish Society is widely read and great help has been afforded in recent years by younger ministers and students who have had the advantage

of work and study in Scotland. There is still, naturally, a strong conservatism in some quarters, and a tendency to regard as the norm of worship for all time the stereotyped tradition which flourished in Scotland fifty years ago. Old prejudices, however, are being allayed, and the younger generation, while anxious to conserve all that was really good in the past, is at the same time sensitive to modern needs and ready to welcome a fresh, realistic approach to all matters relating to the seemly ordering of worship, unfettered by outworn shibboleths.

WILLIAM A. ALSTON.

II. SOUTH AFRICA.

IN this country the largest Presbyterian Church, by a long way, is the Dutch Reformed. That is the popular name for the whole Household of Faith which provides for the spiritual needs of the Africaans-speaking people. That household is found, on a closer view, to be divided into three unequal parts. The differences which keep them apart correspond roughly to the traditional beliefs and practices of the various Scottish Churches. For instance, in one of the divisions—that, by the way, in which President Kruger worshipped—only metrical psalms are used in praise. While this can be matched in some parts of Scotland, it is noticeable that in the “Dopper Kerk” there is no prejudice against instrumental music.

What is generally known as the Dutch Reformed Church is the largest and most influential religious body in South Africa. It is strongly Calvinistic, conservative in theology, and loyal to the canons and formularies of the Synod held at Dordrecht, 1618-1619. During this century it has built a large number of new and beautiful churches under the inspiration of one of its own sons, an architect of genius. In its hymn-book are to be found rich treasures of the old German hymnology and many of the great old German tunes. There are also many hymns taken over from Holland. Of late there has been an urge towards revision.

At one service at least, each Sunday, the Apostles' Creed is recited by the minister, and at its close the congregation responds in a short hymn, “We beseech Thee, O Lord, to strengthen in us, to Thine own glory, our Faith”. Another characteristic of the service is the reading of the Ten Commandments. What we used to call “the long

prayer " is offered before the sermon. During this and the other prayers the men stand and, by all accounts, find this devotional practice wearisome. At present there is little indication of a desire for any change in the mode of worship, although one sometimes hears a complaint that young people find the services somewhat heavy-footed.

One picturesque feature of the Church of the Boer people in all its parts is the Nagmaal, the quarterly observance of the Lord's Supper. As in the older Scottish Church and in some Highland parishes still, people gather in large numbers and spend the week-end in the vicinity of the Church. In days gone by, and to a decreasing extent still, the mode of transport was the ox-waggon, capable of becoming a temporary home for the family. The camp in the church square and in the surrounding fields is a most interesting sight. At the Saturday evening service candidates for Confirmation are received. On Sunday morning early a largely attended prayer service is held. Communion occupies the forenoon. In the afternoon there is a Baptismal service, chiefly for families living on distant farms. The evening service is a great act of Thanksgiving. The formularies in universal use are those appointed by the Synod of Dort.

.

In the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, English-speaking, our practice varies considerably, partly owing to the fact that our ministry is drawn from various schools, Scottish, Irish, English, Canadian; partly because many of our congregations are small and the churches penny-plain. A definite impulse towards care and preparation for the services of the Sanctuary was given by the publication of an Ordinal⁽¹⁾ prepared by the Church Service and Aids to Devotion Committee, under the convenership of the Rev. E. MacMillan, D.D., Pretoria, and issued by authority of the General Assembly in 1919.

On several occasions the General Assembly has urged ministers to make fuller use of the great seasons of the Christian Year, and to this there has been a widespread response. In a few churches there has been introduced an early celebration of Holy Communion on Christmas and Easter Days. Some of the younger ministers have shown

⁽¹⁾ *Service Book and Ordinal of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa.* Maclellan, Jackson & Co., Glasgow, 1921.



'NAGMAAL' (LORD'S SUPPER), MIDDELBURG, TRANSVAAL.
(By permission of South African Railways and Harbours).

eagerness to bring our Church into line with the movement which aims at bringing richness and beauty into church services.

At the last General Assembly a Committee was revived, after a lapse, to foster care and concern in the Church for the worship of the Sanctuary, on the understanding that it and the corresponding Committee of the Church of Scotland should form a link between the two Churches. At the same meeting an account was given of the character and objects of the Church Service Society in Scotland.

In general it may be said that while many of our people are ready to adopt new ways of life in accordance with their changed circumstances, there is a deep conservatism in their attitude to modes of worship. Evidently many cherish with a sense of reverence those forms endeared by memories of "hame and infancy".

J. BRUCE GARDINER.