

## Notes and Comments

FEW of our present readers will have in their possession the *Annual* of 1932-34. We have, therefore, re-printed an article from the pen of the late Rev. Dr Millar Patrick, entitled "Pulpit and Communion Table", which appeared in that number. Dr Patrick was deeply concerned with all matters concerned with the offering of worship, and the theme of his paper (being his Presidential Address to the Society in 1932) is still relevant to our contemporary situation. His moving plea for a reverent symbolism in the setting of corporate worship merits careful consideration. The article is also of special interest at this time when we are engaged in a reappraisal of the work of John Knox and the early Reformers.

The custom of adorning the Holy Table with flowers is widespread in Scotland. There is no doubt that these add colour, grace and beauty to the Sanctuary. But is the Holy Table the right *place* to put them? If anything should be on or above the Table surely it is the central symbol of our Faith, the Cross. We are glad to see that this is being done here and there, with general acceptance and little adverse criticism. It is difficult to see how there could be. We sing about the Cross, and preach about it, using it as a *verbal* focus of our thoughts and aspirations. Can there be any objection to its *visible* use as a sacred symbol, central to our corporate worship, and as a silent but telling reminder of the very faith we profess? Let there be flowers also. But it is surely better to place them elsewhere say, on the chancel steps, or on wall brackets behind the Table, or on a ledge of the reredos, if there be one. "Prettiness" should not be our guide in these matters, but rather the reverent, meaningful use of symbolism. The Table itself should be reserved for the sacramental vessels and what immediately pertains to them, such as the alms-dish containing the people's gifts. If this is done, the teaching is eloquent in its silence.

Has the time not usefully come when we might give the *Amens* their proper and intelligible place in our worship as

the people's assent? They died out altogether in the Sunday worship of the Medieval Church, for in it the people had no longer any responsive part; they could not even hear the service, they simply watched. Our Reformers tried to restore the *Amens*, even sometimes going the length of translating them as "so be it". But we in Scotland have remained dourly Roman and medieval. We sit obstinately dumb in church, and leave as much as we can to the minister. With fine lack of logic we object to the minister being called a priest, because we dislike the word. But we love the thing; so we make him a priest, willy-nilly, and refuse on grounds of high principle (a childish dread of being "Anglican") to take any part in common worship except to sing (usually rather badly) some psalms and hymns.

How much more truly popular our worship would become if we restored, as in the Early Church, the people's *Amens* throughout the prayers, at the end of each section. How warm and living our worship would be if the people voiced their assent by saying *Amen*. We who boast about our worship being scriptural, in fact ignore the Holy Scriptures with happy abandon when they conflict with our deeply-seated prejudices. "Let all the people say *Amen*" is an injunction of the Old Testament; and St. Paul speaks of the "Amen at the Eucharist", mentioning it as the Christian custom.

There is one place, however, where the *Amens* are an anti-climax, and serve no useful purpose. This is at the conclusion of hymns and psalms, and there they might well be omitted. They serve no purpose as a people's assent at this point, and musically they are usually turgid and dull. If the last verse of a singing is sung with a bold, strong *rallentando*, a true culmination is attained. And this indeed is generally accepted as the best musical practice today. How much better than the tame fading out of the *Amen*, which is what generally happens among us.

The principle is simple: restore the *Amen* where it signifies the people's assent and prayer; omit it where it is redundant.

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Some time ago we received an enquiry as to the correct procedure to be observed in wearing medals and decorations with ecclesiastical robes. In the absence of any specific direction from the Church, Army procedure may offer

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guidance. We are indebted to the Assistant Chaplain General, Scottish Command, for the following brief summary of the regulations, in this matter, governing the Royal Army Chaplains' Department.

"When troops are on parade, wearing medals, Chaplains shall wear medals, full-size. These medals shall be worn on the Scarf, not on the Gown or Cassock. At other times, when troops are not wearing medals, Chaplains shall wear medal ribbons on their Scarf".

This information should be helpful to anyone in doubt in the matter ; and we would only add that no one, we hope, would think of wearing these on a Stole.

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This section of the *Annual*, apart from an occasional editorial note, is the work of various contributors, who have something useful to say, but not of sufficient length for an article. Here is an excellent opportunity for members who wish to stress some point in which they are specially interested, and to give their suggestions a wider currency. Such contributions, on matters relevant to our aims, will be welcomed by the Editor.