

EDITORIAL

Services of induction are familiar territory for members of Presbytery (especially ministers), but for most ordinary members of congregations they are relatively rare occurrences. It cannot, therefore, be assumed that for these latter the full significance of the occasion will be clearly understood. The basic point is that the service is a function of Presbytery, and that theoretically, save for the single question put to the members and adherents, it could proceed in the absence of any congregation - as, apparently, was known to happen in the years of conflict prior to the 1843 Disruption.

The fact that the minister's ecclesiastical authority derives from Presbytery and not from Kirk Session or Congregation is fundamental to our system of government, and is designed to prevent the minister from becoming the mere lackey of his people, though in a higher and more noble sense he is, nevertheless, called to be their servant. But it is doubtful if this is a point which comes across clearly in our present way of doing things. The minister being inducted seems to have his juniority highlighted to an almost exaggerated extent, despite the verbal content of the 'charges' delivered towards the close of the service. The whole occasion is invested with an almost oppressive mystique, and the traditional 'induction social' thereafter is viewed, not as a natural extension of the formal service, but as an occasion for light relief, country jokes, and sometimes execrable 'musical' entertainment'.

Our editor, who is seldom noted for any tendency to ape the Romans or Episcopalians, was most impressed on the occasion of the installation of a new rector in St James' Episcopal Church in Leith. The local clergy from several denominations were present, and accorded the same gracious welcome that is extended by Presbytery in similar circumstances. To an outsider, the outstanding feature of the service was its culminating observance of Holy Communion, presided over by Bishop Haggart, but with the newly-installed rector concelebrating by his side. In what one wishes were the automatic norm, and not merely an increasingly common exception, all present, of whatever denomination, were invited to receive the Sacrament. The whole service emphasised authority from above, but allowed for a much less passive role for minister and people, and there was no formal 'social' afterwards, just a friendly get-together during which people mingled freely, but punctuated by one or two brief remarks to the whole gathering. The whole evening was very much a family occasion, integrating the elements of church order, worship and informal fellowship in a pleasing whole.

There are many obvious reasons why the Church of Scotland could not straightforwardly adopt this Episcopal pattern, but at a time when these matters are

under discussion we should seek to learn from our sister donominations ways in which, without destroying all that is good in our own methods, we can make this relatively infrequent occasion one which is more immediately accessible to all present.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

AUTUMN CONFERENCE - REPORT

The Autumn Conference at Dundee was attended by about thirty-four members of the Society with members of the Scottish Church Society and a few visitors. The papers given by James Annand of Lockerbie and Andrew Scobie of Cardross together covered two aspects of worship, and will be published in a future issue of 'The Record' . Such was the quality of their presentation that good discussion ensued of a most interesting and profitable nature. In the afternoon the third part of the proceedings was primarily for members of the Church Service Society and was largely a consideration of policy.

The history of the Society is a story of success in the reawakening of the Church of Scotland to the importance of ordered, reverent and relevant worship. Today the fruits of its labours are to be found in an awareness of these principles and the existence not only of a Panel on Worship as a Standing Committee of the General Assembly, but also of the existence of books of Common Order. As such the Society is to be seen as an influence for good in Public Worship and the Conference affirmed the need now to consolidate the continuing work of the Society in terms of study and the need to publish now material which can be of use to the Church. The need remains and especially so at a time when experiments are being made in new forms of worship, and when there is also evidence of a widespread confusion of standards. We believe that what the Society has to offer out of the treasury of its experience would be welcomed by Divinity Students and Ministers as well as by members of the Church generally. It is therefore along such lines that we propose to expand our activity and fulfil our function and to this end the Council will be applying itself.

W B R Macmillan

SOCIETY NEWS

The Annual Meeting, at which Bill Macmillan will deliver his Presidential Address, will take place at Greyfriars Kirk House on Thursday 22 May at 5.30, with supper at 6.30. The invitation slips to be issued nearer the time will emphasise the need for those desiring supper to indicate this in advance. This simple courtesy would make an enormous difference to those responsible for this arrangement each year.

The Revd David Mill, Minister of Finnart St Paul's, has been appointed the new Editor of 'The Record' , and it is hoped that he will be in a position to be in full command by the autumn of this year (1986). The present Editor will remain in charge of production, together with Sir Ronald Johnson whose proof-reading and other helpful suggestions on points of fact, grammar and clarity of expression are always gratefully appreciated.