

CHURCH AND MINISTRY

A STUDY IN SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE

THE BAIRD LECTURE FOR 1950

BY

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PREFACE

THE lectures upon which this volume is based were delivered at Christ's College, Aberdeen, in 1950 under the auspices of the Baird Trust. The author is happy to have been selected by the Trustees to attempt this task, and glad to have the opportunity of thus making some contribution towards the discussion of one of the most vital and practical and urgent of ecclesiastical problems.

"Church and Ministry" is a topic that has recently occupied the attention of many writers and of almost every religious body. The dreams of this generation seem all to be of community, and the dramatic formation of the World Council of Churches in the autumn of 1948 marked a notable advance in the direction of something more like oneness than has been known to recent centuries. In the interest of the more effectual co-operation which our times manifestly require, it is of grave moment that reliable information with regard to the doctrine and practice of the various Churches should be made generally available, for the difficulties of the situation have been aggravated by misunderstandings that have had their origin in mutual ignorance. It is also a pressing necessity that the several religious communities should clarify their minds as to their position with respect to doctrine, worship and government in relation both to their own historic standards and to those of others, as well as with reference to existing world conditions and needs, and that they be prepared to face the facts revealed. Such Conferences on Faith and Order as those held at Lausanne in 1927 and Edinburgh in 1937 have been valuable in these connections, but too few persons in the various Churches are as yet seriously and actively interested, and there is still a long distance to travel.

Variety is plainly as much God-appointed as Unity: this is clear from the metaphor of the Body which is so prominent in these discussions. But, obviously, variety by itself is no ideal. It represents vitality, but makes one think of Rousseau's phrase, "*brûlant d'amour sans objet*," and the situation demands control. We are called upon energetically to play our individual and denominational and national part, but to do so in purposeful

combination even to the point of sacrifice, to the glory of God. We must offer all that we have in us to give of our own to the enrichment of the spiritual life of the world, and we should be one body in Christ.

The present effort to treat of some aspects of this subject can claim no official standing, and is merely put forward as the result of one individual's observation and reflection; but it is hoped that it may furnish members of the Church of Scotland with a number of things to think about, and may convey to interested parties in other Churches a fairly balanced statement of the positions to which experience has led the Church of Scotland, with some of the reasons annexed and the principles involved. Our mistakes will present plain warnings, nor is it likely that such judgments as have been sound and such emphases as have been imperative will be so overstated as to be misleading. The history of a representative Church should have some general significance; and something will have been achieved if this survey helps in any way towards a better understanding among the Churches.

In the text quotations have, where thought desirable, been modernised, and in the Notes and References at the end of the volume the reference in the case of foreign works has generally been given to English translations where these were accessible.

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