

Book Reviews

The Book of Common Prayer according to the Use of the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon. Published by I.S.P.C.K. Price Rs.4.00. With Supplement Rs.6.00.

A new edition of the Anglican Prayer Book, to meet the needs of that Church in the Province of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, is certainly an event to be welcomed, and it is something of interest beyond the bounds of the C.I.P.B.C. The practical liturgiologist must always be faced with the problem of striking a balance between radical alterations, that may well be desirable, and a more gentle modification, that will gain a wide acceptance. This dilemma is reflected in this revision, but the scales are certainly tipped in favour of the latter rather than the former. However, the wide approval that the new book has received may well justify this policy: the liturgy of the Church must always be an expression of its life, and therefore revisers must make haste slowly.

Now that many of us have been using this book for six months or more, we can perhaps attempt to weigh up its good points, and possibly also pin-point some of its weaknesses, at least as they appear to one individual. Undoubtedly the place where reform was most needed, and where it will be the most noticed, is in the Eucharist. The inclusion of lections from the Old Testament and of well-chosen Introit Psalms is to be welcomed, though it is a pity that the latter are relegated to the Supplement, a fact which may hinder their use. The Intercession now appears in litany form as well as a single prayer: both forms are very fine. The greatest change is in the Canon, where the Sursum and Sanctus are once again brought into close contact with the Prayer of Consecration, which is in threefold form, and which includes not only the Words of Institution, but also an Anamnesis, Epiclesis and Oblation. The form of the prayer rightly discourages any particular theory about a 'moment' of consecration. The revisers' work here deserves high praise.

It is impossible to detail all the changes, as every part of the book has been subject to some degree of revision. One or two useful sections have been added: a form of Compline and of family prayers, a section entitled 'The Ministry of Reconciliation', not to mention many good things in the Supplement. But even if all the changes were catalogued, the over-all impression is still that of a conservative revision, and this is bound to dis-

appoint those who looked for a more thorough reform. The following points come to mind:

1. It is very good and helpful to revise the translation of the Psalms, but has this gone far enough? And surely, it is a retrogressive step for us to invoke God's curse upon our enemies more frequently than in the 1928 revision. Would that considerably more verses, instead of less, were printed in small type, with the option of excluding them. We all know about spiritual interpretations of those passages, and we try to do our best, but the extent to which we can stand on our heads in making ingenious transformations of meaning while saying the Psalms is somewhat limited. The Jewish hymn-book cannot automatically become the hymn-book of the Christian Church: it needs one or two minor operations, if it is not surreptitiously to encourage us to go back on the fullness of the Christian revelation.

2. There seems to be far too much sixteenth- and seventeenth-century verbiage still left behind. But we do now have an admirably brief and objective confession as an alternative form in the Daily Offices. The greatest weight of exhortatory verbosity is still carried by the Ordinal. Need conservatism really have been the order of the day here, and generally could not more have been done for the simplification of the language?

3. And what an opportunity has been missed to do something about the lections at the Eucharist! The Gospel portions remain by and large an unco-ordinated jigsaw puzzle. There have been little touches here and there to make the lections more intelligible, but these only scrape the surface of the problem, particularly where the Epistles are concerned. Would it have been altogether too revolutionary to have printed, shall we say, the text of the Revised Standard Version in the Prayer Book? A continued familiarity with the obscure is no real substitute for meeting the challenge of the Word of God in language that is as clear, correct and contemporary as can be.

4. In the Comfortable Words at the Eucharist, the translation 'propitiation' is still retained for *ἱλασμος*. Is this an oversight or an attempt to conciliate those who hold a particular doctrine of the atonement? Whichever it is, it is a pity, as the idea of propitiation constantly repeated in the context of the Eucharist must consciously or subconsciously distort our concept of God.

These criticisms are not intended in any way to detract from the real merits of this revised Prayer Book. Where in Christendom is there to be found a better Book of Common Prayer? The book must have presented many trials in editing, printing and proof-reading, but mistakes are commendably few.

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The Thirty-nine Articles: by W. R. Matthews. Hodder and Stoughton, London. Pp. 39. Price 3s. 6d.

Cambridge Sermons: by Mervyn Stockwood. Hodder and Stoughton, London. Pp. 128. Price 4s. 6d.

Dr. Matthews' book is not of immediate relevance to India, as the Anglican Church in this land is not in any way bound to the 39 Articles. But his criticisms are symptomatic of a dissatisfaction found among a considerable number of those whose churches are tied to the reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What may be a useful statement of a particular position at a particular time is not necessarily of enduring value, and in this book Dr. Matthews attacks the Articles, particularly Article 17 and its associates, on the ground of their inconsistency with the faith of the New Testament. He underlines the difficulty that many have in giving even a general assent to the Articles, and looks forward to the formulation of new Articles 'which will express our real belief and be intelligible to those whom we hope to convert'. Is there a warning here for us in India, that we should not saddle the united church, when it comes into being, with outmoded and inadequate—and extremely Western—statements of faith?

Bishop Stockwood's sermons are all that one would expect, and they have the great merit that they cannot be preached by anyone else. This book is not for those who look upon published sermons as a pilfering ground for their own pulpits. These sermons are rooted in the particular conditions under which they were preached and serve as a model for relevant, practical and forceful preaching. The Bishop is not afraid to preach on the kind of urgent topics that all too many preachers avoid. 'Whether it's nuclear warfare, inflation, the Suez venture, Marxism, homosexuality, or any issue that is engaging the public mind, the Church must try . . . to get men to think intelligently about the problems and, above all, to consider the Christian principles involved.'

His is not the kind of faith to shun contact with the world, but at the same time he seeks to give the world sound Christian teaching. When preachers launch out into public issues and everyday life all too often they leave behind their Bibles and their doctrine. But Bishop Stockwood takes them with him, and makes their message tell.

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Martha, Martha: by Patricia McGerr. Hodder and Stoughton, London. Pp. 284. Price 18s.

Hollywood reconstructions of the Bible laced with 'romantic' interest do not encourage the reading of Biblical novels. This one begins with the courtship of Martha and goes on to speak of an

affair between the Magdalene and a soldier attached to the court of Herod. The reviewer began his reading with a jaundiced eye.

However this is not a book to be dismissed out of hand, nor is it as inappropriate as might seem for the theologian's bookshelf. It is a novel (and it ought to be judged as such) written to interest and entertain. It has however a serious underlying theme, which is the theologian's problem of faith and works, a theme worked out with imagination and understanding.

Writing her story round the family of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, the novelist deals with the tragic inadequacy of human 'goodness'. It is just because of Martha's high sense of duty that misery comes to her household. If she had not cosseted him Lazarus might not have died, and if she had been less sure of herself and more loving her sister Mary might not have fallen into immorality. The story unfolds Martha's development from 'righteousness'—the righteousness of works—to faith; and does so (almost throughout) with sensitiveness, and often most movingly.

There are some thought-provoking sections in which the novelist's imagination gives a new slant to the central Biblical theme, and quickens perception of it. There is, for example, that part of the book where she sketches acutely and with sympathy the character of Judas. Judas and Martha meet and find themselves sharing a common disappointment over many of the Master's actions. Common sense and a high sense of right and wrong lead them both to a total misunderstanding of His purpose.

The many excellent passages in this novel make it worth reading. It is however long-winded and in the opinion of the reviewer could to advantage have been shortened. It is also unevenly written. There is a noticeable crop of clichés, and an irritating number of split infinitives.

In writing a novel in a Biblical setting the author has attempted a difficult thing which has not quite come off. To quicken the imagination through novel or drama so that we can be helped to grasp the reality of New Testament events as history, and be led thereby to see Jesus through the eyes of His contemporaries, is certainly worth attempting. And it has been done successfully in the past, for example by Dorothy Sayers. Yet it is clear, and this novel underlines the point, that this is an exceedingly hazardous thing to try to do. The God/Man is the hinge around which the plot must move. But how is the novelist to deal with Him? Nothing could be more damaging than for Him as here to be of all the characters the most unconvincing. By following closely the narrative framework of the Gospels (mainly the Fourth Gospel), and by bringing the characters face to face with Jesus in the forefront of the plot, she lands herself in constant dilemmas. She has to make what must be the central character into a subsidiary one, and finds herself in long paraphrasing of the Biblical record of events. A case in point is the last but one chapter where there is an account of the passion written not by the writers of Scripture but by our author—putting it at its highest a second best.

The feeling that one is left with at the end of this novel is that it would have been a much better one if the author had worked out her theme, which she does so well, in a contemporary setting. There are Marthas in abundance in our own day who move through the same darkness of spirit to faith in the same Christ. How much better it would have been if our author had chosen to write of one of them.

D. H. S. LYON

The Collects: An Introduction and Exposition: by L. E. H. Stephens-Hodge. Hodder and Stoughton, London. Pp. 188. Price 5s.

The Holy Communion: An Exposition of the Prayer Book Service: by Martin Parsons. Hodder and Stoughton, London. Pp. 123. Price 5s.

These two volumes are the first in a series of paper-back Prayer Book Commentaries, intended, as the authors point out, for the ordinary worshipper rather than for clergy and scholars. Their approach is, therefore, a simple, devotional and Biblical one and, while considerable care is taken to point out the historical background of the prayers and forms of worship, technical language is generally avoided.

Written as they are in England, with its comparative backwardness in Prayer Book revision, it is not surprising that the books take into account mainly the 1662 version. It is true that they refer back constantly to the earlier versions—Sarum, 1549 and 1552—and they also draw attention at times to more modern revisions in Ireland, S. Africa, Canada, and America, but they do not seem to be familiar with the 1951 and 1960 C.I.P.B.C. revisions. While this is a disadvantage, from the point of view of a reader in India, it is interesting to note that at a number of points the authors look wistfully towards the kind of features these revisions have incorporated. For example, such features as the introduction of an Old Testament Lesson, and a regular Sermon, and the broadening of the scope of the Prayer of Intercession, in the Holy Communion service, and the use of a richer variety of Occasional Prayers for use at Morning and Evening Prayer, are all strongly advocated, bearing witness to the uneasiness felt by many at the limitations of the 1662 book. On the other hand, at some points where modern revisions have seen fit to alter and expand the 1662 services, the writers are not in favour of changes; thus, the Prayer of Consecration in the 1662 Holy Communion service is carefully worded to avoid any suggestion that the sacrifice of Christ is being re-offered or re-presented, since the Reformers were concerned to emphasize the once-for-all-ness of the sacrifice; and Parsons supports the Reformers' position. He also seems to favour the 'northward position' for celebrating the Holy Communion, and to deprecate the use of wafers. But his general approach is not a partisan or controversial one and, on

the question of Private Confession, he sensibly takes the view that this practice is helpful and necessary for some, but not obligatory for all. He also makes the interesting suggestion that the 'Comfortable Word', taken from 1 John 2:1, 2a, should be extended to include the whole of the latter verse: 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'. Coming as it does just before the *Sursum Corda*, this would give to worshippers a significant reminder of the world outside the Church, which is not beyond the scope of the redemptive work of Christ.

While Parsons adopts the method of going through each section of the Holy Communion in turn, and commenting on it, Stephens-Hodge devotes five chapters in Part I to analysing the Collect form of prayer, tracing its historical development, and discussing the theology of the Collects and their use in private and public devotions; in Part II, he deals with all the Collects in the Prayer Book in turn, the Occasional Prayers and Thanksgivings, and the Litany, commenting on each one from a historical, exegetical and devotional point of view.

Undoubtedly these two books should help many to understand better the Collects and the Holy Communion service, and to take part more intelligently in the services. They may also be of help to those whose task it is to explain the Prayer Book services to their congregations; while those belonging to other traditions, who wish to learn more of the riches contained in the 1662 Prayer Book, will also find these books suggestive and helpful.

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The Story of Jesus: by Eleanor Graham. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1959. Pp. 265. Price 15s.

I do not normally like *Lives of Christ*, for I feel that so often they are but poor imitations of the Gospel narrative, and I prefer to go back to these original and inspired accounts, especially now that we have so many good modern translations of the Gospels. I was, however, pleasantly surprised and refreshed when I read Miss Graham's book. This is a very good account of the life of Christ, originally intended for young people, but one that will be widely welcomed by older readers too.

It is based on all four Gospels and contains much of the teaching of Christ, in good modern English, as well as an account of His daily life and work. For example, a section from the Beatitudes:

'But choose righteousness, Jesus told them, as hungrily as you choose good food for your body. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled.'

Don't mind not being important or being poor. Strive for the true humility of saints and very great men. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

Give to all; share all you possess. Be merciful. Blessed are the merciful. To them mercy will be shown ...'

Miss Graham has incorporated much interesting background material in the narrative, which makes the account fascinating and arresting. She presents us with a very clear picture of the people whom Christ met. Just as an example, this description of Nicodemus:

'One night a man came looking for him after dark, with his face hidden in his cloak, which, with its broad coloured border, showed that he was a Pharisee ... He addressed Jesus as "Rabbi", showing him the respect due to a teacher, and his tone was admiring yet cautious ...'

But more important still, is the vivid portrait of Christ, the strong and virile Son of God and Son of man, that this account gives. For example a short passage from the raising of Lazarus:

'... Jesus was racked by the intensity of his prayer and by the power that was moving in him. It was clear to them all that he was enduring a tremendous strain ... Then, so that all who were present should know that what was about to happen was being done by God, Jesus said aloud, "Father, thank you for having heard me", and in commanding tones he called, "Lazarus, come out" ...'

Throughout this book the language is good, clear and vivid, which makes for easy and enjoyable reading. The black and white illustrations by Brian Wildsmith are most unusual and striking.

Altogether, I can thoroughly recommend this book, for I think it will do what this type of book always should—lead its readers back to the Bible for more and fuller understanding.

ROSEMARY J. WILLIAMS

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How to Study the Bible: by Alexander Christie. Published by Union Theological Seminary, Philippines. Pp. 90.

This book is No. 2 of the Christian Leaders' Series, which is intended for 'pastors, deaconesses, and those laymen who want to deepen their own understanding of the Christian faith and become more effective servants of Christ and His Church'. The dust-cover indicates that six volumes are at present projected.

The author admirably fulfils his purpose of presenting the principles of Biblical interpretation for an evangelical group of Churches, beginning with the Inspired Word of God, and explaining how this has been transmitted to us, and how we should approach its interpretation, with a final emphasis on the need to look at the Bible as a whole, and in the widest possible context. If it is made available in India it could be very useful here

for similar groups to those in the Philippines, if an additional bibliography of books published in Britain is included. On p. 69 one of the section-headings appears to have gone wrong but this is a very minor blemish on an admirable book.

2 Peter Reconsidered : by the Rev. E. M. B. Green, M.A. Published by the Tyndale Press, London. Pp. 37. Price 1s. 6d.

This book contains the Tyndale New Testament Lecture for 1960, and its value is out of all proportion to its size. Mr. Green examines the attestation, date, relation to Jude and relation to 1 Peter, and the wide range of footnotes indicates the thoroughness with which he has investigated the problem. A thorough examination of his argument would need another lecture of the same length, and it must suffice to say that he has removed the possibility of any facile statement of the interrelationship of the three Epistles.

The most valuable section of the book, and the one which will provoke most thought, is the last section on 'The Problem of Pseudepigraphy'. The evidence he adduces from the second century makes it impossible to continue to think of it as a common literary device which no one took seriously. Mr. Green's final sentence suspends judgement, but also challenges further investigation. Those who take the 'accepted view' which appears in so many books of New Testament Introduction will have to think again. The fact that this is a small book, dealing with a small book of the Bible, might cause it to be overlooked, but, even in India, New Testament teachers can surely spare one rupee for a book which will not only provide an example of how to argue a case in a truly scholarly fashion, but which also raises very fundamental questions of criticism. There appears to be one Greek misprint on p. 36.

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The Dispersion of the Tamil Church : by Bishop N. C. Sargant. Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1962. Published by I.S.P.C.K., Post Box 1585, Kashmere Gate, Delhi 6. Available in C.L.S., Post Box 501, Park Town, Madras 3. 131 pages with a Bibliographical Index and General Index.

The Rev. Godfrey E. Phillips, writing the Foreword to this book, observes: 'Such facts as are here given are more powerful in the stimulating of zeal for faithful witness than any amount of exhortation on the duty of evangelism.' Bishop Sargant's book, which is a new approach to the subject, is a valuable contribution to the cause of evangelism. The facts which he has gathered with rare patience and persistence from records which were made available to him by friends and Missionary Societies are presented in a new way which makes reading interesting.

The work of the Tamil Christians in the expansion of the

Church in and outside India should inspire others to do the same. Though the Tamils did not go out primarily as evangelists, they carried with them, wherever they went — Mysore, Andhra, North India, Burma, Nicobar Islands, Malaya, Mauritius, South Africa, British Guiana, Trinidad, Fiji, etc.—a faith which was deep and a zeal to proclaim it. The book recounts with precision their help not only in starting new work, but also in reviving the work in difficult and unfruitful areas.

It is another proof to the effectiveness of the witness of the layman in his profession—in the mills, army, railways, estates, etc.—and should inspire every layman. Bishop Sargant has immortalized through his book the names of men like Thambusamy 'Sol' and Dr. Royappa of Car Nicobar Islands, Balavendrum of Penang, Vedamanickam of Mayiladi, the 'Wood' brothers of Andhra, Christian David of Ceylon, Sankaralingam 'Flavel' of Seringapatam, Punyadas of Krishnagiri and a host of others, who otherwise would be forgotten before long.

The second edition is revised, enlarged and brought up to date. While the book should be a valuable addition to any library on Church History, every Tamil Christian should read it and thank God for using some of his own people for the extension of His Kingdom. A Tamil translation, if it is not already made, would thus be helpful.

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