

THE RECORD

The Editor writes:

WHITHER THE CHURCH'S WORSHIP?

The content of this issue of the Record is, as usual, varied, and both articles and reviews more numerous, if, on the whole, somewhat shorter, than has sometimes been the case. The first two reviews draw attention to publications from the 'pens' of members of the Society but the majority reflect the reading list of members of our recently established Liturgical Formation Group (for which see our website). Its aim is to provide help for those who find themselves charged with leading church services – both ministers and others – many of whom, it may seem, merit David Beckett's tart comment on 'Presbyterian leaders who know all too well how to improvise but have never learned to play the tune'. However, if the Anglican Church with its background of a fixed liturgy is, as he suggests, in a somewhat different situation, it, too, seems, in some places to have lost sight of the tune. Another reviewer quotes Bishop David Stancliffe wondering 'at the quality of what is offered in many places in this most important area of the Church's life... How do worshippers manage to keep on going to church faithfully when the way worship is prepared and offered is often so dire; when it is frequently confused with entertainment, and when it is led by those who apparently have no idea about what they are doing or professional competence in doing it?' That might almost have been written by one of our Society's founding fathers.

The denominational variety of the authors of the books reviewed indicate that the concern is now widespread. Equally there seems to be a substantial measure of agreement among them on the desirability of a recovered awareness of some kind of core structure (the 'tune') of Christian worship if we are to see a way forward. Liturgical antiquarianism can assuredly be a dangerous diversion but we do need a clearer awareness of where we have come from if we are to know where we are going. So you will also find two light historical pieces in the following pages.

J.C.S.