

BOOK REVIEWS

Jerusalem Prayers for the World Today. George Appleton, S.P.C.K., London. 6op.

Jerusalem Prayers, prepared by George Appleton, the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, offers a collection of short prayers written primarily by the Archbishop himself although occasionally drawing from other sources as well. The prayers, which grew out of specific situations in the author's life and ministry, cover a wide variety of topics of general concern to adherents of many religious persuasions. A large number of the prayers involve personal pleas for inner holiness and tranquility and the soul's yearning for the peace and presence of God. Other prayers cover seasonal occasions such as Christmas, Easter and Armistice Day. There are also general prayers for the sick, for the victims of disasters and for human unity.

The generality of the prayers does make it certain that they will appeal to a wide variety of people, but it also constitutes a major weakness of the book. The author's broad approach to religious concerns causes much repetitiveness and vagueness in many of the prayers. What are consistently lacking throughout the book are specific petitions and concerns, specific 'earthly' interests in place of the troublesome generalities such as 'christification' and 'uncreated light'. There are, to be sure, the occasional prayers involving the more mundane matters of human relationships but even these tend to drift back into a mystical aura of traditional religious language which is accentuated by the use of 'Thee' and 'Thou' in addressing God. Little room is left in the prayers for the cries of doubt and social failure, so much a part of contemporary life.

The author establishes as one of his objectives in publishing the prayers the aid of others in the actual practice of prayer. It seems that only with great difficulty will this objective be accomplished since the prayers for the most part fail to come to grips with the specific needs and concerns of a significant number of people. The author's final result does not seem to present a viable approach to meaningful prayer. An exercise perhaps more valuable for the readers of *Jerusalem Prayers* may have been a more careful explication by the author of the situation out of which each prayer grew along with the prayer itself. The prayers undoubtedly meant a great deal to the author; it is unfortunate that they come over so blandly to the reader.

B. J. MACHAFFIE

The Church Hymnary. Third edition. Oxford University Press, 1973. Music Edition £1.40, Words only Edition 40p.

The committee in charge of the music of this new edition of *The Church Hymnary* had a difficult remit. From a collection of hymns and tunes they had to select not only what was judged musically good, but what would be acceptable to a large number of congregations whose standards of judgement might not be exclusively musical. Tried favourites may bring a wince to the organist, but their absence would disturb many more Church members. The committee announces its intentions as three: to produce 'easily learned and readily singable' tunes and setting for 'the average congregation', whatever that may be: that familiar tunes omitted be replaced where possible by familiar tunes, or with cross-references to familiar ones: that fine tunes may be used repeatedly, in order to bring back into use 'hymns previously unfamiliar' (*preface*, p. xiii). The notes to the organist are sensible and sensibly short. 'Lively musical interpretation' is suggested as something to be aimed at, and the features of the hymnary which make this possible will be welcomed by organist and congregation alike.

The remainder of the introduction is taken up with notes on Prose Settings (pp. xiv-xvi), and this is certainly one of the most notable advances in this new hymnary. Any choir and congregation supplied with the new hymnary can now widen the range of their singing and their worship. Although the old divided psalms/paraphrases-and-music portion of the hymnary is now abandoned, there is a wide range of metrical psalms and paraphrases to familiar tunes printed, and an equally wide range of well-pointed psalms with some excellent chants – such as those by Walford Davies (598: i) and Stanford (345: d). Choirs already using separate prose psalters will find ample opportunity to retain these and incorporate different words to the combinations of words and music printed in the new hymnary.

Innovations are to be found in tunes, also. Long missing from worship in many Scottish churches, though known to many of the congregations, are tunes like Westminster Abbey (10) and Cwm Rhondda (89: 2) and along with these come innovations such as settings of plainsong (116) or Gelineau psalms (350), novel hymns from Chinese (569) or Malabar (588) worship, and novel pairings such as the tune St. Patrick (143: i) to Joseph Addison's splendid 'The Spacious Firmament on High'. Sensibly the equally suitable and musical 'Firmament' by Walford Davies remains as 143: ii. Other innovations, equally welcome, are tactful changes of set keys, such as the transcription of Glasgow to F (312: i) instead of the old version (*RCH* 365) in G, and also greatly improved layout and setting in hymns such as 'Thy Hand, O God, Has Guided' (424)

where it is no longer possible for hard-pressed organists and choirs to miss out whole verses inadvertently, as they could in *RCH* 215, and in the transcription of 488 'Lumetto' (Jesus Bids Us Shine) which is both more easy to read, and more satisfying to play than *RCH* 671.

One more welcome feature – not quite an innovation, but certainly a notable emphasis – is the number of splendid German tunes which are freely used. The arrangement of tunes is unchronological, and totally new tunes rub shoulders with old favourites, or old tunes which will probably become favourites in course of time.

The arrangement of hymns is grouped in broad areas arranged roughly to match the order of service, beginning with the Approach to God and proceeding (with the sacraments included) to Close of Service and Personal Faith and Devotion. Particularly welcome to this reviewer is the strengthening of the section devoted to Holy Communion, one of the weakest in the *Revised Church Hymnary*. Inevitably not everyone will agree with the choice of all the hymns – particularly it is a pity to see a weak hymn like 585 'According to Thy Gracious Word' survive in the Communion section, though admittedly to the stronger tune St. Flavian than to the banality of Ballerma (*RCH* 313). Some may feel uneasy, too, at the words of some Children's Hymns, such as 467 where Margaret Cropper's

Let us be allowed to help you,
In some plan of loving care,
In some venture for the kingdom,
By our pence and by our prayer.

may seem to make too many concessions to an infant audience – or too few. This, however, simply brings us back to our first point. This was a co-operative venture, and as such it bears the mark of many people's taste. In balance the advance on the preceding hymnbooks, musically and in poetry, is very marked, and when congregations are in a position to re-equip their stocks of books with the new edition, they will almost certainly find enrichment in the quality of their worship.

IAN CAMPBELL

[Dr. Campbell is a son of the manse and an organist. It is hoped to have a contribution in a future issue first from a minister on his experience of using CH3 and secondly from an organist on using it with a choir.—Ed.]

On Prayer. Hans Urs von Balthasar. Translated by A. V. Littledale. Foreword by Kenneth Wollcombe, Bishop of Oxford. S.P.C.K., London. 246 pages. £2.25.

The original title of this book is *Das Betrachtende Gebet*, 'contemplative prayer', and, though one can hardly quarrel with the translator's title, it is well to note that the book is concerned with contemplation or more precisely the contemplative element in prayer. 'Element' is perhaps too weak a word, for one main theme of the book is that contemplation is the vital element in all prayer.

In its application to the liturgy this thesis is stated with force and persuasiveness. 'The liturgy points beyond itself to personal contemplation of the word' (p. 94). If the personal contemplative encounter with the word is missing, liturgical prayer and liturgical celebration has little or no vitalising force either in the life of the individual or the life of the community.

Certain phrases and references (e.g. the reference on p. 169 to 'the great masters of prayer', who were in fact mostly mystics) give the impression that the book is concerned with mystical prayer. In fact the 'contemplative prayer' which is described all the way is what is termed within the Roman Catholic tradition to which the author belongs, the prayer of active contemplation. The value and scope of this kind of prayer has occasioned much controversy, some claiming that it is simply a method for escaping the challenge of that passive or mystical contemplation in which the Holy Spirit takes possession of the whole personality. It would seem that Dr. von Balthasar, at the time he wrote this book, was deeply committed to active contemplation, and, although here and there, as in the dismissal of 'extreme Origenism' and 'the later Palamitism' on p. 117, one detects an anti-mystical bias, yet open to the mystical. I say 'when he wrote this book', for *Das Betrachtende Gebet* was written in 1957.

It is in fact definitely a pre-Vatican II book, and the paragraph on Catholic Action on p. 85 is a striking indication of this. So, also, the facile dismissal of 'the sayings of Buddha and the Koran' (p. 138), would scarcely be possible today.

But, in general, the book wears well. It is good homespun, rich in texture, a book to read slowly and read again. The Bishop of Oxford, in his Foreword, calls it 'a brilliant and sensitive exposition of contemplation', and I have no difficulty in subscribing to this commendation, though I would like to insert the word 'active'. The book is beautifully produced, but it lacks (very much) an Index.

N. D. O'DONOGHUE

Preaching at the Parish Communion. Series 3. Year 2, Gospels. Dr. Hugh Fearn. Mowbrays, £1.50.

Freedom is a dangerous thing. The freedom to range widely and superficially all over the Bible, which many preachers claim to enjoy, is a dangerous freedom, for it leaves too much to personal caprice or last-minute accident, and large areas of the Bible, and of the faith, are left unexplored and uninterpreted. Such an approach to preaching exempts the preacher from having to wrestle with a difficult passage, or facing up to the need for disciplined study. More important, those who come to listen are given a diet that is too unbalanced or idiosyncratic for their growth in understanding, and their needs are unmet and their questions unanswered.

Here is a little book which sets out to guide preachers through the new lectionary cycle adopted by the Church of England and several other Churches. Perhaps it is a pity that the writer assumes that we all know the lectionary. It would be helpful if the readings for the day were at least listed, and I think it is a pity that the Gospel passage, from which we are given only the text chosen by Dr. Fearn, is never related to the other passages, for very often the common theme allows the readings to interpret one another in a most interesting way. However, Dr. Fearn explores the Gospel narratives faithfully and interestingly. It is evident that he has spent many years training preachers and Readers, and understands the difficulties they face. He gets to the heart of the passage. He does not try to be too clever, although there are some original exegetical insights. He does not try to be too topical, although there are topical references. He does not do the preacher's work for him, or superimpose his own personal style. He gives resources to work from. Above all, when he comes to offer an application of the teaching to the lives of the hearers, they are challenged to relate their faith not just to the life of the Church, but to the life of the wider community, and indeed the whole world.

These sermons all have a framework, but the framework is not obtrusive or rigid. Within that framework, Dr. Fearn gives to those who will use his book every encouragement to be themselves. I have found many of his outlines provide excellent foundations upon which to build. The preacher is encouraged to re-examine well-known passages with fresh understanding and common sense, and to adventure into sections of the Gospel one might well choose to avoid, to discover what God is saying to His people there. Above all, those who faithfully come to hear will be grateful for the sound and varied expositions that this book can help their minister to provide.

J. W. M. CAMERON

Twenty Five Psalms from a Modern Liturgical Psalter. Church Information Office. March 1973. 43 pages. 55p.

The versions of the psalms in this booklet are carefully revised drafts for a liturgical psalter which will be issued for use with the modern language services being prepared by the Church of England Liturgical Commission. The preface states that comments on these drafts will be welcomed by the Commission and that if reaction is favourable they hope to have the bulk of the new psalter available for use within the next two years. Its use, they hope, will not be confined to the membership of the Church of England.

In preparing these drafts the Commission have chosen 'a level of language which permits slight archaisms and departures from the norms of prose'. It has seemed to them appropriate that the psalms should appear 'somewhat older, more poetic, more foreign'. On these terms the versions are remarkably successful. They read well and we are informed that pointed texts can be made available so that doubtless they will sing well. But it could be argued that the psalms are sufficiently remote from many people for another slightly archaic version not to be the most urgent need for modern public worship. On the other hand these stated principles have made possible the retention of many well-loved phrases from the present Prayer Book version and this is the more striking to one from another communion more familiar with the Authorized Version of the Psalter.

There are eighteen pages of explanatory notes dealing with some of the difficulties involved in translating the text and explaining and defending some of the differences from other English translations. There is for example an informative discussion on the use of the imperfect in Psalm 23. While the notes are interesting and free from pedantry it might have been helpful to have a list and explanation of some of the technical terms used, especially as the notes are regarded as a 'layman's account'.

Unlike many psalters, this portion of a psalter is attractively set out and easily read. The parallel structure of the poetry is clearly shown, choruses are printed in italics and certain psalms, especially those with liturgical dialogue, have been given sub-headings. This reviewer would use the booklet readily for private devotion.

H. R. SEFTON