

'YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL'

Let the title of one of the late J. B. Phillips' books direct us to several instances in which the tide of everyday usage has come in, leaving our liturgical usage stranded on a sand-bar. Nowadays we 'magnify' only those things which are too small satisfactorily to be observed with the naked eye. Perhaps the word 'exalt' should be used in stead. In lighter vein, we should note that 'meet' has nothing to do with butchers' shops, that 'wont' is precisely the opposite of a flat refusal, and that 'estates of men' have, liturgically, no connection with grouse-shooting. We should also consider the fact that, in common usage, we would count a 'reasonable' sacrifice as being just about adequate, though in truth rather less than it might have been. The retention of archaisms is not automatically harmful, but where the current usage of words has departed radically from the earlier, or where they sound, to the uninitiated, exactly the same as more common words which mean something ludicrously, or even tragically, different, it is important that an adjustment be made, otherwise our worship will, at best, sound quaint, and, at worst, totally misleading. Surely the most unfortunate archaism of all is the use of the word 'pleased' in the funeral committal. Wisely expunged from the 1979 B.C.O., it is still heard by countless numbers of mourners, and must be a source of considerable confusion, even distress, to many.

W.G.N.