

## Reviews

### THE PSALMS IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

J. A. Lamb. The Faith Press ; 21/- Net.

THIS is a timely book for several reasons. First, all the churches are having a close look at the forms of their worship, both in the ordinary diets of morning and evening worship and in their sacramental and occasional services. In all these departments of worship experimental forms are being tried out, and in them all the Psalter finds a place either directly or indirectly. Secondly, there is a renewal of interest in the Psalter itself as a mine of experience and a vocabulary for worship and devotion. This can be seen from the number of Commentaries on the psalms that have recently appeared, as well as the experiments in the use of the Psalter by such men as Gelineau.

Dr Lamb's book appearing in the midst of all this provides a steadying and sustaining influence. Here are set forth clearly and dispassionately the facts about the Psalter and its uses in Christian Worship which can guide and help the contemporary reformers of our worship. As Dr Lamb guides us through the centuries in exciting succession the more one is made to realize the incalculable debt that is owed by Christian worship to the compilers of this marvellous anthology of praise, prayer and devotion. Truly, as Martin Luther wrote with pardonable exaggeration, in the preface to *The German Psalter of 1528*: "If you want to see the holy Christian Church painted in glowing colours and in a form which is really alive, and if you want this to be done in miniature, you must get the Psalter, and there you will have in your possession a fine, clear, pure mirror which will show you what Christianity really is."

The method followed by Dr Lamb is simple. He outlines the ways in which the Psalter has been used from the days of the Jewish Temple worship, the Synagogue, in the New Testament, in the early church, and the churches of East and West ; and in the churches of the Reformation in Europe and in England and Scotland. In each section he follows the same pattern, which is most illuminating, outlining the uses of the Psalter in the Eucharist, or Mass, in the daily offices, in the occasional offices of the church, and

concluding with some account of the way in which the psalms were rendered. Each period is faithfully dealt with. The section on the Early Church is particularly fascinating and shows, incidentally, the depth of Dr Lamb's reading. There are countless quotations from the Fathers, some with insight and some not without humour. Surely one of the strangest uses to which the Psalter has been put in worship was when the people were set to sing psalms in the Cathedral to create a diversion while the good Athanasius made good his escape from the soldiers of Arius. Other quotations have a simple freshness that is full of charm, as, for example, where Augustine writes: "in the psalms sometimes several sing to show that many makes one; sometimes one sings alone to show what he can do for many"; and where Ambrose comments: "Sweet is the chant which does not enervate the body but strengthens the mind and soul."

From this early period Dr Lamb deduces a number of uses of the Psalter which have remained with us in one form or another until to-day. There are occasions when whole psalms are recited or sung during a service. There are occasions when the psalms are said or sung in small portions, sometimes no more than a verse at a time. There is the use of Proper Psalms for special festivals and days in the Christian Year. Finally, the Psalter was and still is the source book for words and ideas for prayers; there are many quotations and reminiscences. Dr Lamb concludes: "Nothing less than this is to be expected, since the Psalter has always been so important a part of Christian worship, and its language so pre-eminently the language of devotion."

The last four chapters deal with the Reformation Churches, and describe the introduction of metrical versions of the psalter. The Reformers, generally, preferred these versions to the prose version, which seems to have been used less and less. But the language of devotion continued to be drawn largely from the Prose Psalter, though the Metrical supplanted it in the other uses to which the Psalter was traditionally put.

In Scotland the story followed the same pattern of the the reformed churches of Europe, the metrical psalter supplanting the Prose. The worship of the Church was enriched by some truly noble words and music, even though there is much that is unworthy both in word and music in the Scottish Metrical Psalter. It is interesting to note a growing desire among certain branches of the Church,



especially in America, to re-introduce the Prose Psalter to our worship, by reading the psalms, or a portion from a psalm, responsively ; for which there is ample precedent in the long history of the Psalter.

This is a fine, scholarly work and is commended to all those who are looking for guidance in the use of the Psalter which is so rich a part of our spiritual heritage. The history of the Church seems to bear out the idea that a psalm-singing, psalter-using church has a rich and varied worship, whereas a church which neglects the Psalter loses a dimension from its worship which nothing can replace.

The Church is indebted to Dr Lamb for this timely reminder couched in such clear and well-documented terms. Incidentally, and for good measure, there is a most comprehensive bibliography.

ALEK W. SAWYER

#### THE WORD IN WORSHIP.

The Revd. Thomas H. Keir. Oxford University Press, 15/-.

MR Keir's Warrack Lectures of 1960 are concerned not so much with the techniques of communication as with the place of preaching in the pattern of our common worship. In this they differ from those of many of his predecessors.

Starting with a statement as to what preaching is—"it clearly involves an encounter with God,"—he proceeds to work out the implications of this in terms of response, liturgy and praise. He outlines the ways in which the worship of the Church in all its aspects and parts should be a unity with the purpose of confronting the worshipper with the living Word and the living Presence of God in such a way as to evoke a response in love and devotion. This is a most urgently needed note for our days. If at times Mr Keir overstates his case in order to make it clearer he must surely be forgiven. And if at times, in his efforts to establish the true catholicity of our forms of worship, he seems to ignore the chequered history of the Church since the Reformation, which is no less a part of our tradition and Scottish ethos than is the Church of the early Fathers, this too is a pardonable emphasis in the light of much of our contemporary churchmanship.

This is a stimulating book written in an interesting, graphic style with pungent comment and telling illustration ; and one which turns our minds back to those roots out of which we derive our patterns of worship, and which are all too often neglected to-day.

ALEK W. SAWYER

THE TRUE FACE OF THE KIRK : *An examination of the Ethos and Tradition of the Church of Scotland.*

By the Revd. R. Stuart Loudon, D.D. Oxford University Press, 1963. pp. 145. Price 21/- net.

THIS is a book of outstanding importance by one of our distinguished younger theologians in Scotland. Dr Loudon has devoted considerable study to the historical development of the Church of Scotland, its liturgy and worship, its doctrines of Church and ministry, its theology of the dominical sacraments, its constitution and government and discipline. He has also, in recent years, taken an active part in the Anglican-Presbyterian Conversations, as one of the official Scottish delegates. He is thus well qualified to interpret to other Communion, and to our own people.

The volume, based on the Cunningham Lectures delivered at New College, within the University of Edinburgh, is a well-informed, persuasive apologia for the Reformed Tradition of Faith and Order, liturgical practice and worship and constitutional government—conciliar in principle—exemplified in Scotland's National Church. Dr Loudon is a staunch defender of the principle of "establishment" as it exists today in Scotland; a pattern which, in some aspects, is the envy of many of our Anglican brethren.

His book, essentially eirenical in spirit, is resolute in asserting the truly catholic and apostolic heritage of the Church of Scotland, as the successor of the Church of St Ninian and St Kentigern, St Columba and St Aidan. Throughout its history the central emphasis is on the conception of the Church as "the community of the baptized." "It is as the Visible Church, the Church Militant here upon earth, that the Church of Scotland has felt its divine vocation to be the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church within this ancient Kingdom."

The author covers a wide field, and in support of his conclusions adduces ample historical and documentary evidence, conveniently arranged in a copious index. As to the vexed question of ministerial order and succession Dr Loudon is not enamoured with the term "validity." He is, however, willing to accept episcopal succession as a "useful sign" of the Church's continuity, but it is not essential. The Church of Scotland also, be it noted, is inflexible in requiring that ordination to the sacred ministry be "..... by prayer and the laying-on of hands by the presbyters (ministers) to whom it doth belong."

DAVID A. HODGES