

A DICTIONARY OF LITURGY AND WORSHIP, edited by J. G. Davies, SCM Press, London, 1972. 395 pp. £4.95.

Applying the principle of *lectio continua* to this worthy ecumenical volume (it includes a number of articles on the worship of Jehovah's Witnesses as well as brief but learned excursions into the major Oriental religions) raises the question: what on earth are liturgiologists for, anyway? Located in an unhappy limbo between the vestibulum of scientific archaeology and the sanctuary of the theologians, the editor seems to have vacillated between a policy of value-free description and one of allusive or slashing (but in either case highly inadequate) theological interpretation. The article 'Ascension Day', for instance, regales us with a detailed exegesis of the practice of the Jerusalem church in the fourth century but is dumb on the way the feast might be related to the whole Easter cycle as an integral part of the Church's celebration of Jesus' entry into glory. The article 'Altar', on the other hand, obligingly excuses us from the labour of understanding the sixteenth-century controversy over the Eucharist as sacrifice by dismissing its terms of reference as lacking the comprehensiveness of modern theological insight: we think otherwise now. Some of the allusions are perplexing: we should probably take the remark that the worship of the Anglican Communion (see 'Anglican Worship') involves an 'appeal . . . to reason' as a reference to the celebrated moderation of Hooker rather than to an anticipatory claim on the heritage of Voltaire.

The presence of one or two very fine contributions (Mr W. Jardine Grisbrooke's unravelling of the problem of the anaphora is a model of clarity) is not really enough to compensate for the misleading and muddled character of some of the crucial entries by the editor himself: see *Mission and Worship*; *Secularization and Worship*. The first of these,

with a sunny indifference to the ambiguities of human life, defines worship as a 'joyful celebration of life in this world', throwing in for good measure the assertion that 'the Lord's Supper itself throughout the apostolic age was essentially a secular act'. It was, rather, the proclamation of the new age (*saeculum*) of the transfigured humanity of Christ, an age not identified with but present to this fallen world-order in a mysterious and subtle dialectic of sin and holiness. The second article betrays allied confusions, inviting us to rediscover the holy in everyday life but not bothering to ponder whether some of the historical forms that secularization (and its accomplice, capitalistic liberalism) have taken in the West do not make this, for many, imaginatively impossible—the technological response to nature, for example, or the break-up of organic community. When will we realize that mere Christianity happens to be inner-worldly, this-worldly *and* other-worldly since it involves the descent of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, our societies and our future?

The whole enterprise of initiating people into a religious tradition through such a Baedeker's guide (no less is the stated aim of Professor Davies on the dust-cover) seems radically mistaken. A tradition of worship is a way of life, a whole world that can only be appreciated after some sort of ego-submission—at the very least that of the literary critic to his text. The reader will understand more of Hinduism from the penultimate chapter of Forster's novel *A Passage to India* than from Dr Parrinder's scholarly few columns—and yet more of Christianity by letting his mind and heart sink into the play of symbol and history in the texts of the traditional liturgies of Christendom.

AIDAN NICHOLS, O.P.