

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR. By A. Allan McArthur, B.D., PH.D. (S.C.M. Press; 15s.)

The 'purging of the temple' carried out in Scotland after 1560 was a much more drastic and comprehensive business than the somewhat superficial 'spring-cleaning' which preceded it in England. For the leaders of the Reform Party ordered not only the 'utter suppression of idolatry, with all monuments of the same': they went further than any of their brethren on the continent of Europe, and overthrew the whole structure of the Christian Year. The Lord's Supper was not to be administered more than four times a year, and on no account on or around Christmas or Easter, lest Popish superstition should be kept alive. For three centuries there was no official recognition of the traditional liturgical year among Presbyterians. Then, very gradually, Christmas and Easter began to be observed here and there. Now, at long last, there is an increasing body of ministers and layfolk in the Established Kirk who feel that it is high time to compile a Kalendar which should include, if nothing else, Christmas, Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. Within the past fifty years more and more churches in Scotland have ventured to mark these foundations of the liturgical year, often with an 'observance' of the Lord's Supper, but the custom is by no means universal. Unless we are mistaken, in only one of the 1,470 churches in Scotland is the Lord's Supper administered weekly.

So it is good to find the Minister of Peterhead setting forth, with masterly liturgical scholarship, the reasons why the more primitive structure of the Christian Year ought to be restored to the Established Kirk, and be given official recognition. He has no desire to take over the Anglican form of the Christian Year as found in the Kalendar of the Book of Common Prayer. 'Our gratitude to the Church of England for the preservation of the precious gift of the Christian Year through the centuries of our neglect does not mean that we can regard the authority of the sixteenth century as being adequate for our purpose. . . . As we restore the architecture of the liturgical year we must ask serious questions regarding the shape and fashion of the structure. Nothing can be taken for granted.' Mr McArthur, to judge from the authorities he quotes, seems to know far more about the latest Catholic liturgical sources of reference than many a Catholic who happens to be liturgically-minded.

One thing is certain: the builders of Peterhead Old Parish Church, that windswept red granite classical kirk on the most easterly point of Scotland, never guessed that more than a century and a half later, its minister would publish a book which, except for a few unimportant details, might easily have been written by a Catholic priest! *The Evolution of the Christian Year* is a solid contribution to the right sort of ecumenism.

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