

# GUIDE TO PRAYER

**B**ISHOP Ramsey considers prayer as Jesus taught and practised it, and then as it is understood in St. Paul, St. John and the Letter to the Hebrews; and he completes his study of these earliest Christian sources with a discussion of the meanings and significances of the story of the Transfiguration as these relate to the inner life of Jesus.

The second part of the book is more directly pastoral in form, and it deals with some of the practical aspects of Christian praying. There are chapters on meditation and contemplation, on the fourteenth-century English mystics and those of sixteenth-century Spain, on the ministry of reconciliation and the place of confession, absolution and spiritual direction in the life of Christian faith. The author concludes his book with two chapters on the Communion of Saints and the life of Heaven.

★ ★ ★

And it is an extraordinary achievement. In about 120 pages Bishop Ramsey has provided such a succinct and clear picture of the Christian tradition's understanding and experience of prayer that when you come, all too soon, to the end you are amazed at the completeness of the presentation and wonder how he has managed to include so much of the Christian account of it all. There cannot be a better short introduction to the subject for the general reader, nor one that will so repay as many readings and ponderings as anyone, however unfamiliar with or experienced in this central matter, is prepared to give it.

And it is all done in the quietest of voices, in a manner that is both direct and gentle, without argument,

*BE STILL AND KNOW.* By Michael Ramsey. (Collins, Fount, £1.25)

alternative interpretations being simply stated together as possibilities, since what matters is not being right but being moved to begin one's own journey, and because the author has

By  
**NEVILLE WARD**

a deeper thing to do—a recurring plea that stillness and silence are of supreme importance.

At the outset there is a notable reduction of the agitation that so often accompanies conventional "problems of prayer" in the Bishop's commendation of a wide and comprehensive view of the subject. We need to see "Christian prayer not as an isolated religious exercise but as an aspect of a many-sided converse between human beings and their Creator." At the same time, throughout the book, many common perplexities seem to vanish under the former Primate's good sense and clarity of expression—a gift that also distinguished the style of his famous predecessor, William Temple.

Among the many sections to which readers will repeatedly return is the author's explanation of the imagery of the Letter to the Hebrews and the difficult idea of the eternal intercession of Christ. He points out that the word translated "intercede" does not properly mean "to speak or to plead or to make petitions or entreaties; it means rather to be with someone, to meet or encounter someone, in relation to others. What is called the intercession of Jesus means his ceaseless presence with the Father."

Bishop Ramsey takes up the idea

again later when he writes of our own praying for others. To intercede for them "means 'to be with' or 'to encounter,' rather than to plead or speak or make petitions. Jesus is ever with the Father with the world upon his heart. May we think of our own prayer as being for a while consciously with the Father, no more and no less than that? . . . To be with God with others on the heart, that is intercession. The secret is the quest of God's presence."

This understanding of the matter leads one to the idea of intercession as contemplation, which several writers, notably J. A. Baker in *The Foolishness of God*, have recently been exploring.

Many people will be grateful for all that Bishop Ramsey says about the Communion of Saints, the place of devotion to the mother of our Lord, the life beyond, and the way the life of prayer comes to Christian fullness through these realities. But in every chapter there are memorable and satisfying things. It is a book to possess and enjoy and thankfully use, not least for its deep view of Christian affection:

Within the family of the saints we may ask the prayers of those who are near to the vision of God, and we may pray for all in earth or paradise or heaven.

But we do not forget that the family includes those who are weak and struggling like ourselves, and those whose saintliness is very faint because the world has been reclaiming them.

Our prayer looks towards the weak as well as towards the strong . . . since the glory of Christ is always one with the agony of his compassion.

## Shorter Notices

Friends will value a booklet, *Mightier than the Waves*, by Geoff Roberts, being the story of Robert Cockerham—drowned while bathing in February last year on a beach in Ecuador, aged about thirty. He was attractive, gifted and modest, and the father of two little boys. They came from Yorkshire, but Cockerham was working as a radio engineer for a Christian station at Pifo in Ecuador. The story of his wife's ordeal on the beach is sensitively related, followed by an account of Robert's life and work. Like his wife he was a converted Christian. (95p, plus 25p for postage, from Mrs. D. Scott, 51, Nab Wood Crescent, Shipley, W. Yorks.)

*Aelred of Rievaulx*, a study by Aelred Squire, OP, of the twelfth-century Cistercian monk known for his spiritual writings as "the English St. Bernard," has been reissued by SPCK in a new hardback edition at £7.50. In a foreword to this second edition of a work first published in 1969 the author explains why it reappears more or less in its original form.

Jesus is characterised as teacher, holy man of Galilee and physician of the body and mind in *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew*, by Geza Vermes. These are the Riddell Memorial Lectures of 1981, now published in book form (University of Newcastle, 6, Kensington Terrace, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, £2.00). The lecturer finally suggests that little by little the Christ of Pauline theology and his Gentile Church took over from the holy man of Galilee, but that, in the "post-Christian" era, Jesus the healer, teacher and helper may yet be invited to "emerge from the shadows of his long exile."

In *Krishnamurti's Journal* (Gollancz, £4.95) Krishnamurti has turned from his familiar dialogue method to a gentle narrative meditation. Short journal entries begin with a keenly observed natural scene, and lead on to his views on the path to wholeness and the nature of reality. His is the way of direct perception—the way revealed by watching and listening rather than by ordered thought or organised faith. It is an approach and a style which appeals to many in the West, but it is not Christian.

## Period piece By MARGARET DANIEL

**T**HERE is a certain poignancy in the publication of *An Unsuitable Attachment*. This is the novel which Barbara Pym's publishers rejected (after successfully producing her six previous ones); and, although the author lived to enjoy a late revival, it was the spurning of this book that silenced the Pym pen for far too long.

Now, posthumously, it is published for the first time; and, in spite of some sketchiness in the story's development, admirers of Miss Pym will find it well up to standard in those perceptive, funny, dexterous ways that give her writing its distinctive quality. People, not plots, have always been this author's main concern, and here is the familiar parish-and-people setting of her earlier novels—though with shadows begin-

*AN UNSUITABLE ATTACHMENT.* By Barbara Pym. (Macmillan, £6.95)

ning to lengthen over the prevailing mood.

A North Kensington parish this time, with the usual bazaars and gossip and a splendid vicarage cat—a small, comparatively well-heeled world, where degrees of breeding are all-important; where desire is tentative; where unspoken thoughts seldom match the spoken words; and where the only newspaper mentioned is the *Church Times*.

A dated world—which understandably, perhaps, was not thought suitable for the swinging 'sixties. But for the more sombre 'eighties, and particularly for readers of this paper, this last offering from a gifted and original talent will prove a period piece of considerable charm.

## LENT BOOK

**I**NTO THE WAY OF PEACE is a book of meditations and readings in St. Luke's Gospel which the Bishop of Norwich has written at the request of the diocese of Blackburn for a Lent book. Devotional studies for every day in Lent are grouped under a weekly theme in the ministry of Jesus, while Sunday meditations are concerned with certain key events in his life.

Most people will agree that helps of this kind are probably most effective

*INTO THE WAY OF PEACE.* By Maurice Wood. (SPCK, £1.25)

when used as the basis of parish or ecumenical study groups, and there is guidance at the end on using the book in corporate study and prayer. So used, this book provides a programme for a Lent course that may well have positive effects in the parish long after the six weeks' work is over.

N.W.

### CURATES' AUGMENTATION FUND

HELPS assistant curates IN  
times of financial NEED

SUBSCRIPTIONS :: DONATIONS :: COLLECTIONS

Applications to: The Honorary Secretary,  
27, Medway Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 2BD.  
Telephone: 01-222 2288.

## Mowbray's Popular Christian Paperbacks

### Glimpses of Faith

GEORGE APPLETON

One hundred meditations for today, ranging over a wide variety of topics, by the former Archbishop of Jerusalem and author of

*The Practice of Prayer.* Recommended reading for Lent. £1.50

### I'm Smiling as Hard as I Can

PENNIE KIDD

The compelling story of a nurse's struggle for fulfilment in the face of crippling disease.

'I hope that this genuine and simply-told story will be of great help to those who read it'—

*The Archbishop of Canterbury, in his Foreword.* £1.75

### The Christian and Divorce

WENDY GREEN

Wendy Green, author, wife and mother, takes a compassionate and constructive look at this growing social phenomenon. Essentially a very practical book to help both counsellor and counselled. £1.75

### The Orthodox Way

KALLISTOS WARE

The classic account of the belief, worship and life of the Orthodox Church is now available in revised reprint, and includes an index. £1.75

## Mowbray's Parish Books

### Preaching on Special Occasions volume 2

D. W. CLEVERLEY FORD

The former Director of the College of Preachers adds a second volume of sermon outlines for Occasions throughout the year, ranging from Pram and Youth Services to a Service for Old People, and including Choir and Flower Festivals in addition to the major Church Festivals.

144pp 216 × 318mm paper £3.50

### Celebrating Holy Week

DAVID AUSTRIBERRY

Foreword by the Bishop of Lichfield

By the author of *Celebrating the Liturgy*, a booklet designed to help all who are concerned to present an integrated approach to the liturgical celebration of Holy Week as the climax of the Christian Year. Includes outline services.

(publishing 25 February) 64pp A5 paper £1.75

### Getting to know your ASB 1980

Compiled by JEAN MAYLAND

Foreword by the Dean of York

Both a straightforward introduction to the services in *The Alternative Service Book 1980* and a six-unit course for parish study groups.

'It will surely help worshippers to know [the ASB] and love it,'—Michael Hocking, *Church Times*.

32pp A5 paper £1.00

### A Theology of Generosity

W. W. BADGER BERRIE

Foreword by the Bishop of Warrington

Highlights the need to understand the biblical concepts and spiritual background to practical giving.

'An excellent little booklet . . . would be useful for discussion group leaders'—*The Harvester*.

40pp A5 paper £1.25 (non-net)



MOWBRAY'S PUBLISHING DIVISION  
Saint Thomas House, Becket Street, Oxford, OX1 1SU