

Reviews

The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody, A. R. Johnson. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979. Pp. xii, 467. £19.95.

It is a great privilege to be allowed to share in the insights of one who has spent most of his life among the Psalmists. Dr. A. R. Johnson's earlier monographs, written between 25 and 30 years ago and well known to all students of the Old Testament, were not solely concerned with the Psalms, of course, but nevertheless the study of the Psalter played a major part in them. Now we have the fruits of years of further reflection upon the matters raised then, with specific reference to the Psalms. This present book the author again describes as a monograph in spite of its 434 pages and so it is; for there are no chapter headings. It is divided into three main sections dealing with the place of the cultic prophet first in the great Israelite festivals, second, in times of national crisis and third, in times of personal crisis, often of the King. The whole work is marked by that scholarly care and deeply religious spirit so characteristic of the author.

In a short postscript Dr. Johnson recognizes that it is impossible to summarize the book but certain things may be said. The role of the cultic prophet is seen to be three-fold; to make intercession, to proclaim God's word, usually one of deliverance and peace, and to preserve and teach Israel's historical traditions not only to the individual sufferer but to the assembled company of Israel. Behind this activity stand certain credal ideas. First, Yahweh is a God who tempers justice with mercy and shows grace to those who are humble and penitent. Second, men should walk in the *Way* of Yahweh which leads through *Truth* and devotion to the oath of obedience implied in a covenant relationship to a rich and full *Life*. Third, and closely related to this, it is the righteous who live and that in virtue of their faith(fulness).

By careful translation and exegesis of a large number of Psalms sometimes, be it said, with rather deft repointing of the consonantal text, the author uncovers these fundamental ideas and much more besides. All are found to fit the pre-exilic situation, some the reign of David himself and some even the pre-Davidic period of the settlement. What is sometimes regarded as the influence of Deuteronomy or the 8th Century prophets is regarded rather as part of the stock of ideas and language which they later used. This view has the advantage of obviating the need to regard the Deuteronomic writers as inventors of a new and wholly distinctive style. Scholars working on the Psalms will not be able to afford to neglect this comprehensive work. Preachers who wish to preach on the Psalms, but are uncertain how to do so, will find much of homiletical value if they will make the effort to read the book carefully, as well as finding their own spiritual perceptions deepened.

There are some questions raised by the book but it is the mark of a

good book to stimulate the thoughts of the reader. Remarkably in a book of this nature I noticed only two typographical errors, a wāw for a yod on p. 245, n 2, and a misplaced bracket on p. 383.

H. MOWVLEY.

A Guide to Old Testament Prophecy, H. Mowvley. London: Lutterworth Press, 1979. Pp. 153. £3.95.

A Guide to O.T. Prophecy admirably fulfils the intention summed up in this title and must prove a valuable aid to students and lay people beginning a study of the prophets of the Old Testament. The first of four sections, Prophetic call and Inspiration, includes a look at the relation of Israel's prophetic movement to prophecy in other parts of the Ancient Near East, glimpsed at in recently discovered texts. The reader is introduced in a helpful way to ideas connected with prophecy that are unfamiliar and difficult for a contemporary westerner to grasp, like the place and meaning of the dynamic word of God or prophetic symbolism. Turning to the formation of the literature, we are shown something of the complexity of the history that lies behind the finished books. As the prophetic traditions were passed on, the original words of the prophets were often re-applied to changing situations, sometimes within a prophetic school, but here Mr. Mowvley does not hide areas of uncertainty in this process such as the role the Deuteronomists played in the shaping of the final traditions. Prophecy cannot be understood in isolation and a third section deals with the difficult but fascinating problem of the relation of the prophets to the official Israelite cult, showing how, in the absence of any clear picture, fragmentary evidence from the Psalms and historical books has to be taken together with clues from the prophets themselves and the accumulated evidence assessed. The prophets also shared, on the one hand, ideas and vocabulary with the Wise Men and on the other, some of the same concerns as the Apocalyptists. The final section deals with the great and abiding themes of prophetic teaching: holiness, righteousness, judgement, repentance and hope for the future, hopes which are "not yet exhausted, but flow into the Christian hope and so enrich it".

There is a wealth of material in this short book which is an excellent guide both to the O.T. prophets and to much recent scholarship about them. It is all presented in a clear and racy style which makes easy reading. A splendid book.

MARY TANNER.

The Church in Town and Countryside: Studies in Church History, volume 16. Edited by Derek Baker. Blackwell, 1979. 486 pp. £25.

This substantial book contains a selection of papers read at recent meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society. The connecting theme is the interaction of the church in the town and city with the surrounding countryside, and this theme is treated with fascinating variety. It is a book that is interesting on several levels. It can be read as a compendium of knowledge about churches in different places in different

periods, for it contains the sort of detailed descriptions of local events and personalities that are missed in bigger and more systematic studies. The scope narrows from essays about the whole church in the early centuries to European themes in the Middle Ages and Reformation times, and then to Great Britain in the last three centuries. There is nothing from the New World or the lands of modern Christian mission.

Here the reader can be introduced to the Church in Merovingian France, and to a carefully mapped story of the Christianization of the Touraine, he can be tantalized by glimpses of the late Byzantine monastery, and perhaps be startled to realize that there were monastery-dominated valleys in Turkey until the Greek exodus of 1924—and that their accounts survive! He can examine the working of clerical non-residence in England and Wales in the eighteenth century, or the questions raised by policy changes in the Scottish Episcopal Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway with regard to urban mission in our century.

There is of course an overall theme, and the study of the ebb and flow of urbanization, and the adaptability of the church at different times to village and city has something to say to churchmen and nonconformists alike. It is clear that the first Christians worked in cities and that our faith arose in an urban setting. To have that theme illustrated from the most diverse material is perhaps the greatest value of this book.

It is also a portrait gallery of forgotten Christians. Who, apart from specialists, has heard of Audeonus of Rouen or Eligius of Noyon, and who would place them in seventh-century Neustria? Here they take their place with St. Martin of Tours and other better-known prelates as true men of faith and action. Diaries of obscure clergymen, local church history studies and one of Disraeli's novels form the basis of other papers, and are called to witness in the search for the authentic life of the churches in nineteenth-century England.

Of particular interest to Baptists are a paper on "Parochial Structure and the Dissemination of Protestantism in Sixteenth-Century England" in which York and Hull are examined and compared; one entitled "Factionalism in Town and Countryside; The Significance of Puritanism and Arminianism", and most of the nineteenth-century studies, especially that by David Bebbington: "The City, the Countryside and the Social Gospel in Late Victorian Nonconformity." Dr. Bebbington writes of the widespread desire to cure the ills of the godless towns by calling the countryside to its Christian duty. The fascination of the simple life in rural surroundings led to some bemused city slum-dwellers spending some time in farming colonies, but to little permanent result except in the planned towns like Bournville, and the garden city movement, which in turn has influenced the planners of our New Towns. Once again we are reminded how many of the good things in modern Britain have grown from the imagination and planning of our nonconformist ancestors.

There are many points at which the reader wishes he had the author near to ask a few more questions, and the book whets the appetite for facts. It also gives much material for reflection for those involved in mission, whether in the city or the countryside.

DEREK B. MURRAY.

Calendar of the Letters of Philip Doddridge, D.D. (1702-1751). By Geoffrey F. Nuttall. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 420 pp. £40 net.

This must be judged one of the most important collections of Non-conformist documentary material to be published for many years. Doddridge's great-grandson, J. D. Humphreys, produced two volumes of *Doddridge's Correspondence and Diary* in 1829-31, but did not hesitate to "bowdlerise" in various ways. Thirty years ago an interesting correspondence concerning John Fergusson, one of Doddridge's pupils, appeared and about the same time F. W. P. Harris listed the letters in Humphreys and many from other sources. Here we have nearly two thousand letters from and to Doddridge, listed, briefly summarized and their present location indicated. It is a notable piece of work, Dr. Nuttall's name guaranteeing exemplary and industrious scholarship in the editing. He has also provided a seventeen-page introduction, plentifully illustrated from the letters, which must be regarded as the best and most authoritative brief account of Doddridge's life and activities.

The letters give a lively picture of an intelligent and growingly influential figure in the first half of the eighteenth century, from his days at the Kibworth Academy under John Jennings, and his lengthy "affair" with Kitty Freeman, while minister at Kibworth. We are then let into Doddridge's uncertainties as to his next move, which included "studying the business of Conformity", and ended with acceptance of the Invitation to Castle Hill, Northampton, and his decision to start an Academy in the town. The last twenty years of his relatively short life were spent in ceaseless activity, widening recognition and a very happy marriage (the letters to and from Mercy Doddridge are among the most welcome and revealing), but an increasing struggle against ill-health.

Light is thrown on the size of congregations, the poverty in certain parts of the country, the state of the roads, the effect of epidemics, the influence of Isaac Watts, the suspicion with which Dissenters viewed the early preaching of Wesley and Whitefield and their disillusionment with the Moravians, the excitement over the '45 and the earth-tremors of 1750, Doddridge's talks with Archbishop Herring in 1748, and a score of other topics. In his summaries Dr. Nuttall quotes skilfully and judiciously.

The Baptist references are not many, but they are valuable. Anne Dutton appears in a somewhat better light than sometimes. It is interesting to find Doddridge congratulating J. C. Ryland on his marriage and the latter presenting Doddridge with one of the works of

Herrman Witsius. Among those who appear briefly are Jacob Rogers, of Bedford, Edward Henwood, of Frome, Charles Bulkley, a pupil who became a Baptist, Grantham Killingworth, of Norwich, Andrew Gifford, of Eagle Street, John Ward, of Gresham College, James Foster, the famous preacher of the Barbican, Thomas Yeoman, a layman of College Lane and Grafton Street, London.

Doddridge emerges from this mass of correspondence as a singularly attractive and human figure, writing his own epitaph in the final moving note from Lisbon, where he died: "The most undisturbed Serenity continues in my Mind . . . I hope I have done my Duty, and the Lord do, as seemeth good in his sight."

Members of the Northants Record Society receive this as Vol. XXIX of the Society's important series of publications. Others can only get it from H.M.S.O. at what will seem a forbidding price, but it is worth far more than four or five more ordinary books.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

A Venerable Dissenting Institution. Dr. Williams's Library 1729-1979.

By Ernest A. Payne, C.H., D.D. (Dr. Williams's Trust. Price 70p).

The late Dr. Payne's lecture to the Friends of Dr. Williams's Library was given to mark the 250th Anniversary of the Library which he describes as the "largest and richest collection of non-Conformist material in the world". Dr. Daniel Williams bequeathed in 1716 his own substantial library to trustees in the hope it would become, in the words of David Defoe, "the compleatest library in Britain".

The lecture surveys more than the growth of valuable historical archives and their worthy housing by the trustees first at Red Cross Street, and eventually at Gordon Square. Dr. Daniel Williams was a Presbyterian minister who exercised a powerful influence in high circles in London in the decades that followed the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689. For a hundred years after his death, this Library provided a home in which leaders of the three Dissenting Denominations took counsel and co-operated closely. Characteristically Dr. Payne has made us aware that this is all part of the living stream of our Free Church history.

N. S. MOON.