

Reviews.

Reunion and Nonconformity, by W. G. Peck. (A. R. Mowbray and Co., Ltd., 2s. 6d.)

THE thesis of this little book is that "the fundamental grounds of the whole Nonconformist structure of thought and practice are to be found in the assertion of the individual as prior to society, whether secular or religious; and in the assertion of a permanent and ineffaceable distinction and distance between secular society and its organisation in the State, and that religious society which is called the Church." The author hardly appreciates that the Nonconformist spirit is that which exalts life above organisation, and he appears unaware of the doctrine held, for example, by Baptists that the Church must consist wholly of people who have pledged themselves to Jesus Christ and to His service. He regards "Nonconformity as a declining force," incompetent to deal with modern issues, and strangely intractable when faced with Anglo-Catholic ideas of Reunion. He forgets that the Baptist and Methodist Churches are world-wide, and probably does not know that the Baptist World Congress, when it meets next year at Berlin, will represent a communion thrice the size of the Anglican. The author's closing review of the problem in which he discusses doctrinal, psychological and ministerial difficulties again reveals the wide gulf which exists between the Anglican and the Free Church conceptions of vital issues.

From the wrapper of the book we learn that "the author was for many years a well-known Methodist minister before his reception into the Church of England in 1915." Obviously his name should be familiar; it is confession of inexcusable ignorance when we admit that neither as an erst-while "well-known Methodist," nor as a fully-fledged Anglican Rector, had we come across it; but that ignorance must not hinder our congratulations to him on the ease with which he can now write of John Wesley's "schism," of Baptists who "had a doctrinal speciality of their own," of Nonconformist "denominations," "bodies," "sects," etc. We are grateful to him for pointing out that Nonconformity "does not produce supreme religious personality" (our pen almost wrote the names of Bunyan and John Angell James and Spurgeon and G. H. Morrison and a host of other Nonconformists of "supreme religious personality"), and we bow our heads as we are reminded that "there is no Free Church art

or architecture; no Free Church music worthy of attention, except a few Methodist hymn tunes; no Free Church poetry" and that in the realm of theology "Nonconformity seems to offer little or no permanent contribution." Probably Mr. Peck would say it is a mere accident that one of the theological editors of *The Library of Constructive Theology* is a Nonconformist, and that of the first six volumes announced in that very able series, the first is by a Presbyterian, the third by a Baptist and the sixth by a Congregationalist. But Nonconformity has done one thing, and for that we must be supremely thankful: it produced Mr. Peck.

SEYMOUR J. PRICE.

A History of British Baptists, by W. T. Whitley, M.A., LL.D., F.R.Hist.S., Second (Revised) Edition, (The Kingsgate Press, 7s. 6d. net.)

THE first edition of this, the standard History of our Church, was fully reviewed by Dr. Dakin on its publication in 1923, and no one who wishes to understand our history can afford to be without it. We need only, therefore, express gratitude that, in less than ten years, a second edition has been called for. Dr. Whitley has taken the opportunity of referring to a few books published in the last eight years, of doing ampler justice to the prominent position occupied by Abraham Booth, of making a few small corrections and of providing an ampler index. These revisions make the new volume essential to those who have a copy of the first edition. Once again his colleagues in the Baptist Historical Society would congratulate Dr. Whitley on this invaluable history and on his many other historical contributions. By his painstaking industry, he has greatly lightened the task of those who are inspired by his example.

A History of Manchester College. By V. D. Davis, B.A. (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 10s. net.)

SINCE the article on *Dissenting Academies* in this issue was written, the above volume has been published. It deals in an interesting, well documented, way with the progress of the College from its foundation in Manchester in 1786 to its establishment in Oxford in 1889 as a post-graduate School of Theology. The author also traces the history of earlier academies which preceded the establishment at Manchester. Notable names in the record are Charles Wellbeloved, John Kenrick, James Martineau, and L. P. Jacks. The volume is well produced with four illustrations and is a useful addition to the books which

are revealing the important part played by Nonconformists not only in the supply of men for their own ministry, but also in the provision of secondary education.

Catholicity, by Fr. Herbert H. Kelly, S.S.M. (Student Christian Movement Press, 4s.)

THE author defines catholicity as not an attainment, so much as a quality of mind; it cannot be possessed, but it can be hungered after. His attitude to Reunion is "that no real unity can be made which ignores what is, if in numbers alone, the greatest of all churches. Yet most of us do ignore the Roman question simply because the immovable assertiveness of its attitude makes it impossible to do anything effective." He also makes the interesting admission that over "*the relation of baptism to conversion* the Church, till the fourth century, had no difficulty. People were baptized because they had been converted." Later in the same chapter the author discusses "the custom of *Infant Baptism*, which has obviously so changed our whole outlook that the simple, primitive way of thinking is no longer possible to us." As will be realised the book is written from the high-Anglican standpoint. It is interesting and as far as possible a controversial tone is avoided.

Europe and the Gospel. By Everett Gill. Educational Department Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 174 pp.

SINCE 1921 Dr. Gill has represented the Southern Baptist Convention in Europe. He now makes Bucarest his headquarters. For some time he was engaged in relief work in Russia. Formerly he and his wife were missionaries in Italy, having gone there first in 1905. He is therefore well-qualified to write on Baptist life on the Continent. This book seeks to do for American Baptists what Dr. Rushbrooke has done for those in this country, but since the American interests are centred mainly in the southern lands, while ours are in the north, Dr. Gill's emphasis and standpoint are rather different from those to which we are accustomed and his work will be useful here as well as across the Atlantic. The chapters on Rumania, Spain, Hungary, Jugoslavia, and Italy contain material not easily found elsewhere. Fifteen illustrations add to the attractiveness of the book. There are two general chapters, and throughout Mr. Gill sets his story against the wide background of Christian history. Those who are hoping to go to the Berlin Congress next year will find in these pages much that will help them to understand their Continental brethren.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.