

Reviews.

C. H. Spurgeon, by J. C. Carlile, C.H., D.D. (R.T.S. and Kingsgate Press. 7s. 6d. net.)

The career and influence of Spurgeon are unique in the history of the Christian pulpit, and it is fitting that the approaching centenary of his birth should be heralded by a new biography bearing the joint imprint of the R.T.S. and the Baptist Union Publication Department. Dr. Carlile brings to his task many advantages, not the least of which is his own personal indebtedness to Spurgeon and the Pastors' College. This, while it may lack the disinterested impartiality of an "outsider," supplies a warm tone of continuous appreciation which makes the book very readable. Spurgeon, in one special period of his life, was a storm centre, and Dr. Carlile's handling of the controversy is admirable.

Spurgeon in this volume is placed against the background of Victorian England, and his biographer is careful to point out facts that may appear strange to younger readers accustomed to class the great preacher among the now out-worn traditions of the Victorian era) which show Spurgeon as an innovator. By the hyper-Calvinists he was regarded as unsound; by traditional ecclesiastical standards and methods he was revealed as a daring revolutionary. The traditionalists did not hesitate to class him as a religious mountebank! Yet Spurgeon pursued his magnificent campaign on behalf of a religion centred in the Grace of God in Christ, and both by voice and pen he maintained a ministry without parallel in Christian story.

Although he was not a narrow denominationalist, the Baptist denomination owes him a great and special debt. The magnitude of this debt, for example, in his services to church extension and education, warrants a fuller treatment than Dr. Carlile allows himself. This new study of Spurgeon does not eliminate the need for monographs on such topics as Spurgeon's thought. Admittedly he was not a "systematic" theologian; yet, as Dr. Carlile points out, behind the wealth of beautiful illustration and imagery, behind the vigorous and unexcelled use of Anglo-Saxon, there lay an attitude of mind which succeeded in restoring to thousands a dynamic belief at a time when a rather materialistic science was doing its best to undermine the structure of religion.

Among the most attractive parts of this book are the sections in which Dr. Carlile takes us, stage by stage, through Spurgeon's

varied activities. This story, so well told, makes it quite clear why all "Spurgeon's men" speak so affectionately of "the Guv'nor." Dr. Carlile's own affection is clear in every chapter, and he succeeds in transferring his own enthusiasm to the reader.

Bunhill Fields. Vol. II. by Alfred W. Light. (C. J. Farncombe and Sons, Ltd. 6s. net.)

Moss soon gathers on tomb-stones. Inscriptions quickly become defaced. Little-used paths are dim with weeds in a short time. The ravages of centuries are irreparable. We would give much for a complete list of those buried in the *Campo Santo* of Bunhill Fields. We should then trace many of our spiritual ancestors, and outstanding historical questions would be nearer solution.

In the absence of that list we gladly welcome Mr. Light's second volume dealing with the crumbling stones, sinking graves and disappearing inscriptions of this citadel of the dead. Copies of his first volume, published in 1913, are still available. It contained a short history of the cemetery and of the Act of Uniformity, a plan showing over 100 interments with corresponding memoirs and various photographs. The quality of the first volume is well maintained in the second. Here are memoirs of over fifty other worthies, a chart of their tombs, sixty illustrations, three funeral orations (two are appallingly long), and historical notes by Dr. Whitley. The volume is of value to all who love their heritage, but is of particular interest to Baptists, as those dealt with include William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys, Vavasor Powell, James Upton, and others held in warm regard among us.

JOSEPH IVIMEY, historian of the English Baptists, died on 8 February, 1834. A meeting will be held on the evening of Wednesday, 14 February, 1934, in the Kingsgate Chapel, Eagle Street, where his church worships, to honour his memory.