

Reviews.

Religion in the Victorian Era, by L. E. Elliott Binns, D.D. (The Lutterworth Press, 15s.)

Dr. Binns set himself the heavy task of tracing the varied developments of religion in the Victorian era, and he walks among the events and personalities of that crowded period with assured footsteps. He confesses that the genesis of the volume is to be found in a suggestion made to him considerably more than thirty years ago, which set up a thirst for biography which has proved insatiable. Although his thirst remains unquenched, he has certainly had many long drinks, for over one hundred biographies are quoted somewhat freely. In addition, many social and theological volumes are taken in toll as the author wends his way, in twenty-five chapters, from the pre-Victorian era to the End of an Epoch, treating skilfully of the Oxford Movement, the Roman Church, Religion and Science and History, Social problems, Education, the Press, Worship, Reunion and kindred issues.

He has thus written almost a Blue Book or Cyclopaedia, one that will be kept close at hand for frequent reference. Glowing periods are absent—if the truth must be told, the prose is generally heavy, and the book would be all the better for a little sparkle. But the matter is excellent: the names and dates and facts are here; external influences arising from political developments at home and abroad are discussed; the course of theological thought is traced with care. The age was a great one to write about. Without question the changes between 1837 and 1901 surpassed in magnitude and variety those of any earlier period. When every walk of life was affected, it was impossible for religion to continue on a placid course, undisturbed by new developments in social and scientific thought.

The author has evidently striven to be fair, and the volume is without bias, though Free Churchmen may derive less satisfaction than Anglicans from some of his estimates and judgments. The influence of Spurgeon and Dale and Parker was greater than that of some to whom considerably more space is devoted; and it may be questioned if Dr. Binns has fully appreciated the widespread influence of the many strong Free Churches in all the important towns and cities. Their ministers spoke to the multitude and to the Council Chamber where many of their members were giving service.

The volume will long hold its place in literature dealing with the Victorian age, and any one who reads it will feel that he has a better understanding of the actions and reactions of the great

forces which made and remade Victorian life and character. A few small errors should be corrected in a second edition. The Baptist Home Missionary Society was founded in 1797, not 1799 (p. 423); the Secretary of the Congregational Union was W. J. Woods, not Wood (p. 464); A. M. Fairbairn's first Christian name was not Alexander (pp. 112 and 451); Dr. A. Peel is not A. W. Peel (p. 27 and a dozen other places); Moffatt should be Moffat (pp. 380 and 381); Spurgeon was not a Dr. (p. 524).

The Catholic Regeneration of the Church of England, by Paula Schaefer. (Williams & Norgate, 10s. 6d.)

Perhaps the most interesting part of this work is the author's singularly frank and revealing Preface. She tells us that she was born in 1886 at Essen, around whose old beautiful minster and in its cloisters she dreamt alone. When later she was taken to the Protestant Church, there always remained in her soul "a secret longing for the warm shadow of the minster, with its saints and the candles before the smiling picture of our Lady with the Babe, and the small red flame trembling in the darkness of the High Altar." The years passed, she took her doctorate in philosophy, and in 1925 attended the World Conference at Stockholm. There a new world was revealed. Back in Germany she studied theology, and ultimately came to England. By "chance" she dropped into a convent at Oxford and found all she had longed for so long. She found "the genuine continuation of the Catholic mediaeval Church in England," a Church "really Catholic and really national at once, really evangelical in the sense of the Holy Scriptures, and also possessing the full Catholic sacraments." But now she "reads with increasing anxiety the reports dealing with all sorts of schemes of unions planned with non-Catholic bodies. If, for instance, the South Indian scheme should be put into practice in the present form, the Church will cease to be a Catholic body. Then there will be no doubt of the author's future way."

Well, it is instructive to read the conclusions of a German Anglo-Catholic on English Church life. She has Teutonic thoroughness, her research has been extensive, and her enthusiasm for the Anglo-Catholic Movement is such that she writes with genuine intensity. Unfortunately the book is marred by historical inaccuracies, and some of the conclusions are amazing. Baptists escape with two or three passing references, but the Methodists are not so fortunate. They will rub their eyes in amazement as they read that "Methodism was unsatisfactory to the educated man and the theologian, and the method of conversion unpleasant to the well-bred Englishman. 'The Methodists preached to the nerves,' they said." Well, well!