

## Reviews.

*The Gathered Community*, by Robert C. Walton (Carey Press, 7s. 6d.).

We may well be grateful to the group of younger Baptist ministers and especially to the writer R. C. Walton for an illuminating discussion of the Baptist doctrine of the church under the title *The Gathered Community* (Carey Press). This is no dull theological treatise but a readable book written out of a deep concern for the welfare and witness of our Baptist churches and in a clear, pleasant style which conveys the thought readily to the reader.

The structure of the book is simple and straightforward. The first section deals with the witness of the past, offering in one chapter the evidence of the New Testament for a conception of the church and its ministry and then in a second chapter outlining the life and thought of the seventeenth-century Baptists. The second section turns the attention to the important theme of the renewal of the church's life today, discussing the community of the church, the ministry, the sacraments, and offering in a concluding chapter some suggestions regarding the way ahead.

Into these chapters a great deal of valuable information has been packed. The argument of the book is well supported by documentary evidence and this is no small part of its value; the reference both to passages in the New Testament and to writings of seventeenth-century Baptists offer the historical material upon which our judgments concerning the church and the ministry must be based.

The main purpose of the book is well maintained through its chapters, but in addition are many passages of lucid and virile thinking which challenge the attention: e.g. "The great interest of States and Kingdoms lies in men and women, who, having seen evil and found release from it, are prepared to live in and under the discipline of a holy community, the Christian society, the company of redeemed people whose influence may sweeten the bitter waters of national life and whose spiritual power may reinvigorate a world grown old and tired" (p. 55-56); "... the seventeenth-century Baptists never committed the error of thinking that the Christian life is a purely individual thing. It was, they believed, intensely personal, because it sprang out of a personal

experience of God, but it was also social, lived within the fellowship of the church" (p. 68); ". . . individualism is everywhere discredited and men are searching for new forms of community life. Their quest is more subconscious than conscious at the moment, but this felt need may well revolutionise the structure of society" (p. 110); "A true community is one which stands between the individual and the State, saving him, on the one hand from isolation, and on the other, from being an impersonal cog in the machine" (p. 111); "The grace of God and the benefits of Christ are given as we live the Christian life in all its fullness, and as we participate in the complete activity of the church. It is not only of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but of our whole life in the Body of Christ, in its proclamation of the Good News, in its observance of the sacraments, in the reality of its fellowship and in its call to righteous conduct and sacrificial service that we say—

"Here O my Lord I see Thee face to face,  
Here would I touch and handle things unseen" (p. 161).

Passages like these, and there are many of them in the book, start the mind off on the track of vital spiritual issues and should result in a good deal of enriching thinking.

The main thesis of the book appears to be that, whereas the modern world is seeking new forms of community life, Baptists in their historic witness possess a distinctive form of community which belongs to the essentials of the Christian faith as we find it in the New Testament, and therefore they should recapture this historic community both as a needed contribution to the universal church in the modern world and as a preparation for God's further leading in the future. This is an important theme lucidly expounded and if its implications are accepted our church life will be invigorated. Yet it also compels certain questions. We may ask whether the way ahead is really to be found by looking back? The call to recover our historic witness is not a sufficiently impelling motive to bring renewal to the life of the churches. It is doubtful too if the way of renewal will be found by so much emphasis upon the external structure of the church. The discussion upon the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper occupies, in a book of 170 pages nearly 40 pages; this is out of all proportion in comparison with the amount of attention given to the sacraments either in the New Testament or in the life of the seventeenth-century Baptists. This brings us near to the danger inherent in the thinking of those within the Christian fellowship and familiar with its customs, namely that of taking fundamental experiences for granted and concentrating attention upon issues which, while they are important,

derive their importance only by reason of their expression of just those fundamental experiences.

But the most serious question raised by the book is why its theme is not more adequately related to the message and work of Jesus Himself. The New Testament references are taken chiefly from the Acts, then the Epistles and those chapters of the Gospels which deal with the Lord's Supper. Yet a discussion whose central theme is that the church is a gathered community needs a clearer appreciation of the message of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. It is stated on p. 20 that "the conception of the Kingdom of God is central in our Lord's teaching" but this central conception is introduced only in connection with the question whether Jesus intended to found the church. Yet the essential feature of the Kingdom as our Lord proclaimed it is community, a new kind of community among men rooted in a new fellowship with God. It has been clearly demonstrated, e.g. by C. H. Dodd, that the Kingdom is not to be relegated entirely to the future, but is also a present reality. The new relationships which constitute the life of the Kingdom are possible here and now; are indeed realised in Jesus Himself, fundamentally in His perfect union with the Father leading to the complete harmony of His own personality and issuing in relationships of love with his fellow men. This conception of the Kingdom as a life of new relationships into which we can enter now, so that as we accept them we do indeed pass from death to life, means that the church is the place where the Kingdom is partially realised inasmuch as here are people living in trust and obedience to God our Father and in mutual love and forgiveness with one another. What we need, therefore, is a deeper penetration into this conception of God's Kingdom and a more vivid realisation of these personal relationships which are open to all. This central message of our Lord has to be interpreted in terms of the modern world and has to be realised in our church life and witness. Just because a Baptist church is a gathered community we must go farther back than the apostolic doctrine; we must understand the nature of the Kingdom as our Lord proclaimed it and let this guide us in the shaping of the community of the church today. In such a task the material gathered in the book is invaluable and will no doubt stimulate much useful thought and discussion.

L. G. CHAMPION.

*Henry Wheeler Robinson*, a memoir, by Ernest A. Payne.  
(Nisbet, 12s. 6d.)

All who knew Wheeler Robinson will be grateful to Mr. Payne for this interesting volume. He is to be congratulated on the way in which, with the limited material at his disposal, he has

discharged the task of writing the memoir, and it was a happy idea to include seven unpublished lectures. The comparatively uneventful life of a scholar and a recluse does not provide anything in the way of thrilling episodes, but Mr. Payne's short biography will grip the attention of all who knew its subject.

That Wheeler Robinson's childhood was rather sad will be news to many. Wordsworth's dictum that the boy is the father of the man applies in a special degree to him, for as a boy he displayed that passion for punctuality, hard work, thoroughness and exactness which so pre-eminently characterised the man. After spending ten years as a student (at Regent's Park, Edinburgh, Mansfield College and German universities) and six years in two short pastorates (Pitlochry and Coventry) he entered upon the real work of his life, first as a tutor at Rawdon and then as Principal of Regent's Park at London and Oxford. His outstanding characteristic was his massive scholarship. In this realm, most of us felt that he towered above us like a Colossus. He seemed to have read everything. In every field of theological study he was quite at home, while as an Old Testament scholar he had few peers. As Mr. Payne records, W.E. Blomfield justly said of him: "He is a great scholar, perhaps the most outstanding scholar we have in our Church," while Arthur Dakin no less justly declared that it is only once in a century, perhaps not as often, that Baptists have in their midst a man of Wheeler Robinson's intellectual and spiritual eminence.

On the practical and administrative side, the outstanding achievement of his life was the establishing of a Baptist college at Oxford. For some years it had been recognised by the more forward-looking members of our denomination that it was high time that Baptists should have a college of their own at either Oxford or Cambridge. Oxford was Wheeler Robinson's choice, and for that choice he advanced some sound reasons. For ten years (1927-1937) he was the principal of a college that had no home, and had to divide his time between London and Oxford. Such a state of affairs must have been peculiarly irksome to a man of his tastes and temperament. It was during this period, too, that three great friends of Regent's Park College died—C. M. Hardy, W. E. Blomfield and Herbert Marnham, all of whom had they lived a few years longer would have rendered invaluable assistance in raising funds for the new College. As it was, when the appeal for £50,000 was issued, Wheeler Robinson had to take the leading part in the raising of funds, and that was no easy task in view of the lukewarmness of the greater part of the denomination to the scheme. With characteristic loyalty and energy he gave himself heart and soul to the cause. Then, after the stone-laying in 1938, he devoted as much careful attention to the building

operations as the clerk of works himself. All this labour naturally interfered with the literary work on which his heart was set, but it brought him a great reward. It must have been pure and unsullied joy to him—perhaps the crowning joy of his life—when Regent's Park College at last had a new home, and at Oxford!

It is a rather sad reflection on the state of our denomination that Wheeler Robinson's gifts and achievements were not more generally estimated at their true worth, and were never recognised and honoured by his election to the Chair of the Baptist Union.

Yet it is only fair to admit that for this failure he was himself, in part, to blame. He was too severely academic—and it is just that aspect of his personality that is brought out in the Gunn portrait, while it was that aspect only which those who were superficially acquainted with him knew. His intimates were aware of his profoundly religious character and of the kindness of which he was capable, but to those on the fringe of his acquaintance he appeared to possess only the sternness of an Old Testament prophet, and seemed to lack the graciousness which the New Testament commends, and which he undoubtedly possessed. The plain truth about him is that his passion for scholarship far exceeded his desire to communicate the message of the Gospel to ordinary people. He was rather apt to look down on what he called "popular" or "semi-popular" work. He was inclined to overlook the fact that to present the highest truth in such a way that the ordinary man can grasp and assimilate it, and thus, in the best sense of the term to "popularise" it, is, in reality, a greater achievement than merely to state it in a scholarly way. And surely, if men of science, like the late Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir James Jeans could sometimes leave the Olympian heights of pure science and communicate the truths of science in a simple and untechnical way that fascinated ordinary people, it ought to be possible for the Christian scholar occasionally to leave the Olympian heights of academic theology and communicate the highest and best he knows to simple people even as the Master did to the peasantry of Galilee. At this crisis of civilisation, when everything worth-while seems at times to be tottering to its fall, those who have given the profoundest thought to the message of the Gospel ought to be the best able to present it in a living way to a world that is likely to perish for the lack of it. This "popular" work is not inferior to academic theological work, but is its true climax and its proper crown.

The memoir indicates that there were times when Wheeler Robinson's own mind and heart were deeply exercised by the very problem raised in the previous paragraph. How revealing are the words: "Benjamin, the thing that worries me is that I don't love men as Christ did," (p. 26); and a note written in 1918,

"The conviction grows upon me that the chief cause of my failure in the ministry . . . is want of a real sympathy with men in themselves, their outlook, their daily pursuits, their rough and ready reactions on life. One proof of this is the tendency to contempt for the obvious crudity of all this life from the intellectual standpoint. My interest in religion is much too psychological and metaphysical for the true 'pastor in parochia'." (p. 66.)

Thus while we can feel nothing but profound admiration for his scholarship, and gratefully recognise that he rendered magnificent service by raising the intellectual standards of theological education in our colleges, we must insist, as he to some extent failed to insist, that for the Christian minister scholarship must be a servant and not a master, a means and not an end in itself—a means whereby the truth of the Gospel may be set forth to our own day and generation in forms that are intellectually sound, and in terms that are arresting, clear as crystal, cogent and convincing. To produce men who are more or less capable of doing work of that kind is the supreme end for which the colleges exist.

Of the lectures published in this volume, the most noteworthy, perhaps is that on John Henry Newman. It reminds one of Harnack's brilliant essay on "Was wir von der römischen Kirche lernen und nicht lernen sollen," and it is not too high praise to say that the essay on Newman is no less brilliant. The lecture on "The Making of a Minister" is somewhat marred by that almost exclusively academic emphasis which has already been referred to. The lectures on "The Christian Doctrine of Eternal Life" are excellent examples of biblical theology. The other two lectures deal with the question of authority in religion and with the "goads" of God.

L. H. MARSHALL.

*The Life and Faith of the Baptists*, by H. Wheeler Robinson. (Kingsgate Press, 6s. net.) *The Great Succession*, by Ernest A. Payne. (Carey Press, 3s. 6d. net.)

The welcome re-appearance of these two books relieves in some measure the present famine of literature dealing with the principles and history of the Baptists in this country, for the want of which many, especially the young, remain largely ignorant of their own faith and ancestry. Having acquired the copyright from Messrs Methuen who in 1927, published it in their series *The Faiths: Varieties of Christian Expression*, the Kingsgate Press have done well to re-issue Dr. Wheeler Robinson's exposition of Baptist beliefs and practices. It was revised, brought up to date, with a new concluding chapter added, shortly before its distinguished author died in 1945, and Rev. E. A. Payne has

appended a useful bibliography. Writing for sympathetic readers of other communions as well as for fellow-Baptists, Dr. Robinson describes the origins and general spirit of the Baptists, their conception of the Church and contribution to the Church Universal, some typical personalities and scenes, the meaning and value of Believers' Baptism and the missionary and freedom-loving passion which he claims to be outstanding characteristics of Baptist people. The seventh chapter is not only evidence of the author's rightful readiness to indicate the limitations no less than the strength of the denominational witness, one which he regards as no isolated phenomenon, but a particular expression of the consciousness of the whole Christian Church. Here, then, clearly and cogently expressed, is a comprehensive, authoritative account of the faith and life of English Baptists which should be in the hands of every Baptist Church member, and which will enlighten, inform and challenge all fortunate enough to obtain a copy.

The tour of the Baptist picture gallery on which Dr. Robinson in his second chapter conducts his readers, Mr. Payne in *The Great Succession* continues, along the missionary wing. Here are portraits of Angus, Underhill, Baynes, Knibb, Saker and others of that great company of leaders who served the Baptist Missionary Society at home and abroad during the expansive years of the nineteenth century, all portrayed with that insight, clarity, skill and knowledge based on original research which we have now learned to expect from Mr. Payne. Such men and women as these have a claim upon the grateful remembrance of present-day Baptists, and it is to be hoped that a wide circulation awaits this new edition of the little book in which Mr. Payne so vividly brings them before us. It would prove an interesting study to inquire into the reasons why the denomination no longer appears to breed the great and memorable leaders in which it was so rich in the homeland and overseas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Meanwhile, the reading of these two books should help Baptists, in Martineau's words quoted by Dr. Robinson, to discover afresh, "how great a thing it is to live at the end of so many ages, heirs to the thoughts of the wise, the labours of the good, the prayers of the devout."

GRAHAM W. HUGHES.

*History of Western Philosophy*, by Bertrand Russell. (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 21s.)

A generation ago, Rudolf Eucken, whom the late Professor Laird regarded as a pioneer of the movement that led to "existence" philosophies in Germany, published his *Problems of Human Life*, which attempted to tell the story of philosophy largely in personal terms, that is, with each philosopher studied in the light of his personal reactions to the intellectual and practical problems confronting him. Professor R. G. Collingwood used to insist on the necessity of finding out where the shoe pinched in each generation, and what were the questions which each philosopher believed himself to be answering. One of the most distinguished of modern British philosophers has now issued as a *magnum opus* a *History of Western Philosophy*, which has as its sub-title "And its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day."

It is truly a *magnum opus*, great in conception and imposing in execution. There are 864 pp. of text and the index runs to another 50 pp. The proportions of the work are important. In the brilliant little *History of Philosophy*, which Professor C. C. J. Webb contributed in 1915 to the Home University Library, he devoted almost exactly half his space to the period since the Reformation. Of the remainder considerably more was given to Ancient Philosophy than to the two chapters entitled "Philosophy and the Rise of Christianity" and "Philosophy during the Minority of Modern Europe." Mr. Bertrand Russell, on the other hand, gives nearly a quarter of his massive volume to what he calls "Catholic Philosophy." Of the remainder, 300 pp. deal with Ancient Philosophy and 343 pp. with Modern Philosophy. The somewhat different proportions of the two books illustrate the revived interest in the thought of the Christian Fathers and the Schoolmen, and the central section is by no means the least interesting part of Mr. Russell's book. It is, however, not without significance that whereas Professor Webb thought it necessary in his brief sketch to give several pages to the rise of Christianity and to the teaching and person of Jesus, Mr. Russell passes rapidly from a 16 page chapter on the religious development of the Jews to a 10 page chapter on Christianity during the first four centuries. Moreover, a good deal of the latter is given up to comment upon and acceptance of Gibbon's famous analysis of the causes for the victory of Christianity. On Gibbon, Mr. Russell rests somewhat heavily in this section of his work.

Mr. Russell is certainly right in claiming that it is important that from time to time attempts such as his should be made to review the whole movement of European thought, even though



one man cannot hope to be equally at home in all parts of the field. The kind of survey which H. G. Wells attempted gallantly and fascinatingly, though at times wilfully rather than judiciously, in his *Outline of History*, which Professor Latourette has just successfully completed in regard to the expansion of the Church, and which Professor Toynbee is so fruitfully engaged upon in the study of civilisations, Mr. Russell here offers in the realm of philosophy, which, as he understands it, is "something intermediate between theology and science" (p. 10.) One after another, the systems of the philosophers from Thales to John Dewey are passed under review. Mr. Russell sets each thinker in the *milieu* of his time and occasionally inserts chapters of purely social history. He writes, as always, with clarity and point, and the result is a book which is interesting from first to last, and is sure to be widely read. Many of his sections are most stimulating; almost all contain memorable paragraphs and phrases, as well as much that is entertaining. The chief surprises concern the relative space given to certain names, e.g., as much to Hobbes as to Thomas Aquinas, more to Nietzsche than to Descartes, and three times as much to Locke as to Leibniz. It is clear that what we have here is not so much a text-book as a personal appraisal.

At the end, therefore, one naturally asks, What are the author's conclusions? The value of the passing of so much material through one mind and the construction out of it of a unified tale is the moral that is drawn. Mr. Russell is eager to criticise the great ones of the past and to indicate the weaknesses and limitations of their thought, sometimes with devastating effect. His last chapter is devoted to "The Philosophy of Logical Analysis," of which he has himself been one of the most influential exponents. By its means he believes that definite answers, "which have the quality of science rather than philosophy," can be given to many age-long problems. He admits, however, that questions of value lie outside its purview. Such questions he appears to regard as "legitimately matters of feeling." He does not believe that "philosophy can either prove or disprove the truth of religious dogma" (p. 863). But he would have philosophy renounce the metaphysical questionings that have been its main subject matter, in favour of what he claims as the scientific truthfulness of analytical empiricism. This accounts for the impression made on one throughout the book that the author is standing at a distance throwing stones—often very bright and well polished ones—at the stream of philosophers as they pass. It accounts also for the strange and rather melancholy inconclusiveness with which it ends. One cannot apply to one of Mr. Russell's attainments the first part of Bacon's famous maxim, nor does it fit this book. But reflecting on the story of Western

Philosophy one may still at the end of it believe that "depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion," and that there is still a place for philosophy as metaphysics.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

*Salvation Symphony*, by G. H. King. (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 5s.)

This book consists of four Bible readings delivered by the author at the 1946 Keswick Convention. It leaves one with mixed impressions. Outstanding amongst them is that of the ingenuity with which the writer has schematized his interpretations of Scripture and Christian experience. The analytic method, when indulged to the extent it is here, can defeat its own object. It is intended to simplify; instead it becomes wearisome. Occasionally, too, the style of the writing becomes less than worthy of the theme, and that because the author cannot resist using "snappy" phrases. Many passages, however, are eloquent of his sincerity and earnestness.

*Shrines of Christendom. The Reflections of a Pilgrim*, by C. B. Jewson. (Kingsgate Press, Carey Press, 5s.)

This book contains the author's reflections on experiences of Christian fellowship which he has enjoyed and some account of the historical traditions associated with the places of his pilgrimages. He writes as a convinced Baptist who believes that "any curbing of the variety of ways in which Christians offer worship to the Almighty would be an unmixed evil." Part of the attractiveness of these essays is that there is no attempt at sequence between them or at uniformity of presentation. The reader is taken from morning service at St. Mary's, Norwich, to a little chapel in Brittany; from Norwich again (the Cathedral, Parish Church, and the Gildencroft Quaker Meeting) to Rome, Brussels, Chartres, Assisi; from Rugby Chapel to West Ham Central Mission and Fetter Lane Chapel. Mr. Jewson has gone to pains to verify the accuracy of his facts, but he does not offer "guide-book stuff." In Rome, for example, his objective was a small Christian fellowship meeting off the beaten track of the tourist. He has moved about with an alert and imaginative historical interest and his book will be read with pleasure. One's only complaint is that one or two of the essays are disappointingly short.

G. W. RUSLING.