

Reviews

Puritanism and Richard Baxter, by Hugh Martin. (S.C.M. Press, 15s.)

IN this instructive and enjoyable book—the substance of which is being delivered this year in the form of the Whitley Lectures—Dr. Martin's skilful pen has addressed itself to the task of presenting the truth about Puritanism and of illustrating the principles and achievements of the movement by portraying the life and work of Richard Baxter.

First we are given the history of the movement and then shown its attitude (so often and widely misunderstood and as blithely misrepresented by those who should know better) to the arts, recreation, Sunday, holy days and toleration, in the course of which the author exposes the falsity of the vulgar legend of the gloomy, philistine Puritan which was deliberately and mischievously created at the Restoration. In so doing Dr. Martin, who writes with balanced judgment and a sound historical perspective, has rendered a real service. In the making of modern England and the shaping of our national character the Puritans played a notable part and it is important, therefore, that our knowledge and understanding of them should be in accord with the truth. Dr. Martin then goes on to describe the manifold gifts and rich attainments of that "evangelical, Catholic Christian," Richard Baxter, who as the author shows was typical of Puritanism at its best. Baxter was a remarkable man and many will be grateful for this enlightening study of his character and work. Based upon sound scholarship, this volume is a valuable contribution to biography, to the history of the seventeenth century, to our knowledge of English religious development and, by much of what Dr. Martin says as well as the spirit in which it is expressed, to the cause of Christian unity. Those of us who have derived so much pleasure and profit from reading these pages will wish for the book the wide circulation it deserves.

Bible Themes from Matthew Henry, by Selwyn Gummer and Frank Colquhoun. (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 17s. 6d.)

From Matthew Henry's famous Commentary Mr. Gummer has selected, arranged and edited under 26 doctrinal subjects a number of passages from the expositor's choicest work. While these are primarily devotional studies, the preacher will find in the

book an ample store of biblical material for sermons, drawn from a work that has stood the test of some 250 years. Each section concludes with a sermon outline by Mr. Colquhoun based upon the respective themes. In the preacher's study this volume may occupy a useful place. Those who cannot raise the 10 guineas to purchase the new edition of Matthew Henry advertised on the jacket will find in this volume an abundant supply of devotional and homiletic material, and no doubt many a hard-pressed preacher will, as the result of its publication, feel thankful to Mr. Gummer and Mr. Colquhoun for the work they have done.

The Protestant Credo, ed. Vergilius Ferm. (Philosophical Library, New York, \$5.00.)

Here are ten essays by a group of distinguished American scholars, including two Baptists, who represent the major denominations. All the contributors are of the liberal school and they write with a clarity and quality of style for which one looks in vain, as a rule, amongst the neo-orthodox. Many good things are said and much that is provocative, while the reader's interest is held throughout. All the same, one doubts whether the Protestantism of the future lies, as one contributor suggests, in a religion which is content to leave Jesus live in the first century and in which the miracles, resurrection, the sinlessness of Christ, the relation of the Cross to salvation, among other things, will occupy a minor place. Amid the dogmatisms of our day the stress in these pages on freedom of inquiry is to be welcomed, but there is more to Protestantism than that. Consequently, while there is much in this book to enjoy, one puts it down with some sense of disappointment.

GRAHAM W. HUGHES.

Congregational Praise. Tonic Solfa Edition. (Independent Press, 19s. 6d.)

The publication of *Congregational Praise* was noticed in these pages in April, 1952. The issue of a Tonic Solfa edition of any tune-book may come as a surprise to those who use the Old Notation. But this fine volume reminds us that there are many members of choirs and congregations who rely on the Tonic Solfa method. These are admirably served by this new edition, which enables such an outstanding collection of hymns, tunes and chants to become still more widely known.

FRANK DODSON.

A Brief History of English Congregationalism, by Albert Peel.
(Independent Press, 3s. 6d.)

This is a new reprint of a book that first appeared in 1931. Within fewer than a hundred pages the skilful pen of the late Albert Peel has packed a surprising amount of information and traced the story in a way that never loses interest. It should do much to inspire devotion to the principles which the author cherished as well as impart knowledge. We wish for it a wide circulation and hope it will not be neglected by Baptists who, after all, share part of the story and many of the principles.

One Christ, One World, One Church, by Norman Victor Hope.
(Independent Press, 3s. 6d.)

The Professor of Church History at Princeton here provides an admirable introduction to the rise and progress of the Ecumenical movement. Briefly but comprehensively and clearly he traces its history to Amsterdam, 1948, and then discusses some of the problems and prospects, ending with a bibliography of recent publications. Defending the use of the term "ecumenical," he points to its long and honourable history. As a short, concise account of the movement, this small book meets a need and will be welcomed. We assume that naming the author of *The Claims of the Free Churches* as "Harry" Townsend is a slip of the pen rather than an instance of American friendliness.

Doctrinal Preaching. Its neglect and recovery, by W. E. Sangster.
(Berean Press, 2s.)

In the seventh Joseph Smith Memorial Lecture Dr. Sangster laments the drift in modern preaching from the foundation truths of the Christian Faith. He pleads for a return to the preaching, squarely based on the Bible, that expounds great themes and relates them to life. Faults in pulpit language and style are exposed and the need for plain, clear speech is called for. This is a timely publication and, were it to be widely read and heeded, one feels sure the effect would be a much-needed improvement in modern sermons.

The Billy Graham Story, by Charles T. Cook. (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 8s. 6d.)

Based upon material gathered from many sources, this little book by the consulting editor of *The Christian* gives an interesting account of the life and work of the young Baptist evangelist whose campaigns in America and Britain have had spectacular results.

Dr. Cook attributes his success to his personal qualities, the centrality of the Bible and the Cross to his message, his co-operation with the churches and the support of widespread prayer. A number of illustrations and five of Dr. Graham's addresses are included. His British campaign will have created a demand for such a book as this and in this well-written and entirely sympathetic interpretation of the man and his message that need will be met.

Seventh Day Baptist Year Book. (American Sabbath Tract Society, \$1.50.)

Here are the minutes of the General Conference, 1953, annual reports, denominational statistics and directory of the Sabbatarian Baptists. Not the least active of their departments is the Historical Society, which reports the preparation of a treatise on the Stennett family, the collection of numerous genealogies and proposed studies of Peter Chamberlen, Wm. H. Black and Wm. M. Jones. The appointment of a delegate to attend the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Ill. is reported as is an enlightened resolution on international affairs passed by the Conference. Total membership is given as 6,257.

Baptist Life in Beeston: 1804-1954, by Cecil Powney and John E. T. Hough. (C. Powney, John Clifford Memorial Church, Beeston, Notts., 2s. 3d. post free.)

This booklet of 40 pp. or so tells the story of the church whose chief claim to fame is that it nurtured, baptized and sent into the ministry Dr. John Clifford, after whom it was renamed in 1936. Although the church (which is of the General Baptist tradition) was formed in 1804, there were Baptists in Beeston long before that date. Having in its time overcome many trials, the church continues its witness, and will doubtless find fresh inspiration from a fresh consideration of its history.

Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England, by Roland N. Stromberg. (Oxford University Press, 21s.)

There are many who would regard the religious history of the eighteenth century merely as a period of rest after the fervour and excitement of the theological and ecclesiastical disputes of the seventeenth, or as a time of Christian regression, which heralded the age of the Methodist Revival and the great Missionary century. Yet to those interested in, what this work terms *intellectual history*, it is a time full of interest and movement, presenting us with a key to interpret the preceding and subsequent movements.

Mr. Stromberg illustrates well the variety of ideas held at this time by Arians, Socinians, Deists and Arminians, and describes their relationships with each other and, in particular with orthodox Christianity, for the orthodox were as anxious to defend their views as were the other groups to attack them. Deism is set in its true perspective. If this was a period when religion "fell the victim of complacency and materialism," and when thought in every realm of ideas, especially the political, became secularised, yet it was also characterised by much Christian idealism, if not ecstatic emotion, and deep piety, if not enthusiasm. Even leading Deists considered they were called to purify, rather than to attack, the Christian religion.

This book is admirably written. While frequent quotations, which are always relevant, give to the reader a feeling for the period, they are always controlled and never affect the stylistic unity of the work, which, while scholarly, is always readable. His footnotes, in particular, are admirable. They give to the reader all the critical apparatus he needs and, moreover, illumine the text without confusing it. An extensive bibliography which is appended is also of very great value.

The greatest merit of this study is that it is not merely descriptive, but also interpretive. Its most important features are its consideration of the factors which gave rise to religious liberalism in the eighteenth century, and its attempt to evaluate the movement in history and thought. It ends by suggesting that the neo-orthodox revival of this century, having revolted against the submission of liberal Christianity to science and secularism, is now in danger of "glorifying the irrational," and that many Christians find themselves with the Restoration and Augustan divines wondering, "how a religion unsupported by reason can possibly stand."

D. MERVYN HIMBURY.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life, by J. R. Macphail. (Oxford University Press, 10s. 6d.)

Though the author modestly claims "no special qualifications" this is a valuable introductory handbook of Christian theology. It does not pretend to be a specialist work but is an exposition of the main articles of the Faith which few could read without profit. The author is obviously familiar with common objections and difficulties and his book should perform an evangelistic as well as an educational function. There is some of the freshness and attack we associate with writers such as C. S. Lewis, and a command of language and quotation we might expect from one who is a Professor of English. Some chapters are outstandingly

good, the section on eschatology less satisfying. Our own view of baptism is hardly summarised by the comment, "no man can be baptized until he feels the need of it." But this is a good piece of work and ones hopes for more from the same pen.

The Development of Negro Religion, by R. F. Johnston. (Philosophical Library, New York, \$3.00.)

A Baptist might be forgiven for turning with some anticipation to a book purporting to discuss American negro religion from a historical and contemporary point of view. One would imagine that such a discussion could hardly fail to contribute something, if only incidentally, to knowledge of our own denomination in America. But the nature, power, and distribution of Baptist convictions among American negroes are, for all practical purposes, overlooked. This study is disappointing, however, even within its own limits. The level of discussion is frequently superficial, a fact which is not concealed by an unhappy addiction to academic jargon.

G. W. RUSLING.

Unchangeable Friend, by G. Oswald Cornish. (Independent Press, 8s. 6d.)

This book must be looked at as a whole. The writing is unequal and the style sometimes gives one the impression of rather flowery pulpit oratory. It would be possible to pick it up and be unimpressed by an isolated passage. But when it is viewed as a whole and we get the plan which is in the author's mind, it can scarcely fail to fire us. Mr. Cornish introduces his theme by an introduction "On Christian faith in terms of personal relationship." In Part I he investigates the spiritual meaning of our Lord's resurrection and the gift of Pentecost. In Part II he works out how we are to possess the spiritual resources available in the living Christ. His closing section is "On growing young with Jesus Christ." The most refreshing thing about the book is the obvious devotion of the author to his Lord.

A Book of Personal Religion, edited by Nathaniel Micklem. (Independent Press, 7s. 6d.)

This is a new and enlarged edition of a book first published in 1938. Dr. Micklem has gathered together for devotional reading passages from some of the great Puritans, in order, as he tells us in the introduction, to give help to those who need guidance in the

spiritual life and to recall Free Churchmen to the wealth and range of their own spiritual inheritance. The passages will be new to most readers, and are taken from John Bunyan, John Calvin, Philip Doddridge, John Newton, Isaac Watts, Thomas Brooks, John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Knox and Matthew Henry. In any anthology inequalities in the writing and the value of the extracts are inevitable. But in an anthology such as this, another difficulty arises. Tastes in devotional literature are almost as individual and decided as tastes in humorous literature. Here one man's meat is indeed another man's poison. For example, Dr. Micklem wishes that the exhortation from John Knox's Communion Liturgy might frequently be read at our Communion services. At least one reader fervently hopes that it may not. Yet one cannot but agree heartily with Dr. Micklem on the value and "raciness" of the extract from John Bunyan. The passage from Richard Baxter "On praise and meditation" is also fine. Dr. Micklem comments that though we cannot return to the theology of our fathers, we must return to their religion. But to some people the effort to shut their eyes to the theology is as much an effort with the Puritans as with writers of other traditions. To those, however, who love them and their outlook, this book will afford very much valuable reading.

How to say your Prayers, edited by W. Eric Hodgson and H. A. Hamilton. (Independent Press, 1s.)

This booklet is quite first-class. In the space of 40 pages it gives short but adequate directions for starting out on the life of prayer, outlines schemes for morning and evening prayer, and suggests an alternative scheme for prayer on rising, at lunch time, at tea time, and on going to bed. It has a note on the devotional use of the Bible, with nine pages of suggested readings for devotional use, arranged under subjects. There are suggestions for further reading. This little book can, and should, be placed in the hands of every young church member.

DENIS LANT.