

Reviews

Biblical Interpretation, by E. C. Blackman. (Independent Press, London, 12s. 6d.).

At present two tendencies appear in Biblical interpretation. One is found among young people who join the church and endeavour to understand the Word of God; too often they are confused by Biblical criticism and take refuge in Fundamentalism because it seems to make matters simpler and because it seems to present a more authoritative Bible. The other tendency is found among Biblical scholars and theologians who are questioning the historical approach, which many of us have come to take for granted, and are suggesting alternatives in terms of allegory and the like. The writings of Scandinavian scholars in recent years, for example, are driving us to reconsider the nature of Biblical interpretation.

This book meets the need of the present day in that it has something to say to both groups. Younger thinkers, who do not fully understand how the critical era began, or how it has been dealt with by such recent scholars as C. H. Dodd and T. W. Manson, will find the chapter on "Modern Criticism" particularly helpful, whilst their more learned brethren, wrestling with problems of interpretation, will find the chapter on "The Development of Exegesis" invaluable as a summary of how our forefathers have tried to understand the Bible. Perhaps some of them will read twice the passage where we are reminded that Luther regarded some allegorical interpretations as "monkey tricks," and believed that Scripture, rightly interpreted, could be understood by all.

This is all set in the context of the Church's problem, which the author believes to be the enabling of those who come into church membership to read their Bibles with ease. There is an alternative to Fundamentalism, which must be clarified; introduction must now make way for interpretation. The last chapter is therefore headed, "The Present Task in Biblical Exposition."

It is a work that will repay careful study, though the reviewer wishes that in many places the style was a little simpler, and the division of the subject matter a little more obvious. This is especially so in the final chapter, where more definite and specific conclusions would be particularly welcome.

One Finger for God, by Stuart B. Jackman. (Independent Press, London, 12s. 6d.).

What is the connection between what the Church believes and the lives of men and women? What is the link between what the

Christian does on Sunday and what he does the rest of the week? These are the questions which many people are asking, and they are basically the questions which called forth this book. But let no one imagine, therefore, that what we are given is a theological treatise, or a book which ministers need to simplify for their congregations. The author writes not about theology, but about people.

First, he shows what happens when men and women take their Christianity seriously and practise it without counting the cost. To illustrate his point, he takes us to the mountains of Papua and to the church in Madagascar and Bengal. He then asks what happens when the church preaches the Gospel without facing up to its social implications, and he takes us to South Africa and Jamaica. Then, just before British people can cry, "Shame!" he comes back to the homeland and paints pictures, beautiful and sordid, to show where the Church of Britain fails when she might succeed.

Mr. Jackman has an arresting style, and few books dealing with such weighty problems combine such an easy approach with such a stirring challenge to the individual reader. The book literally reads like a novel, and yet you can never forget that what the author is saying is true. There is much here of which the Church should take note, and the only criticism one would venture is the fear that Mr. Jackman's challenge may lead to a *mere* social gospel; a religion without a Cross. But that will depend upon the reader more than upon the writer.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, by H. H. Rowley. (S.P.C.K., London, 2s.).

Ever since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the layman has found himself asking what value these Scrolls are to him and to his faith. Many suggestions have been made, some of which have hinted that these Scrolls have revolutionised New Testament study. It has even been claimed that Christians and Jews have been prevented from indulging in honest scholarship because of their religious loyalties, whilst New Testament scholars have boycotted the whole subject.

In this lecture, Dr. Rowley examines some of these more extreme ideas, showing that they depend partly on a doctoring of the evidence concerning the Sect, and partly on the dismissal of the evidence of the New Testament, followed by the substitution of something quite different out of the imagination of the writer. What the Scrolls really do is to *supplement* our knowledge of the background of the work of Jesus, but it is fantastic to suggest that they give us any evidence of the nature of early Christianity.

The man who wants to read the opinions of others, and to see those opinions critically, would get great help from this little book.

A. GILMORE.

Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan. Third Revised Edition. (Christian Literature Society, Madras, 2s. 6d.); *Services Proposed for Use at the Inauguration.* 75 Naye Paise. Both books obtainable in England from the Lutterworth Press.

So far as I know, the present negotiations in North India and Ceylon are the first in which Baptists anywhere have officially participated. Some discussion, not always well informed, has taken place among British Baptists. It is the Baptists of North India and Pakistan who have to make the difficult decisions. The first requirement on our part is an understanding of their very different situation, as a small part of a small Christian body confronted by an overwhelming non-Christian mass, and also sympathy with the motive behind the scheme, a desire for a truer and more effective Christian witness. It is also right that they and we should approach any such proposal with caution: a union achieved through disloyalty to conscience would be worthless.

In any true union of churches there must be give and take. And Baptists will beware of regarding all they do now in Britain as essential Christianity, or even as essential Baptist practice, remembering how far in some respects we have departed from the ways of our own forefathers. The Plan is, in fact, a blend of episcopacy, connexionalism and independency, and elements from the experience of all the negotiating churches are included. I can refer to only three points: church membership, the ministry, and baptism.

Our fundamental Baptist contention that the church is composed of believers only is admitted. Only those who have been baptized and have publicly confessed their faith are members in full standing. Those dedicated or "baptized" in infancy are, equally, "members under instruction."

In the initial unification of the ministry there is no repudiation of past ministries and no re-ordination, but a service of mutual recognition and re-commissioning for wider service. There are to be bishops, representatively appointed with constitutional functions, ultimate authority residing, under Christ, in the church as a whole.

The more centrally directed church would involve less departure from accustomed ways than here, since our Baptist churches in North India already accept the supervision of the District Union and the missionary.

Baptism is defined as "a sign of cleansing from sin, of engrafting into Christ, of entrance into the covenant of grace, of fellowship with Christ in His Death and Resurrection, and of rising to newness of life." Infant baptism and believers' baptism are recognized as alternative practices. Any minister who has scruples about baptizing an infant can ask another to officiate. Baptists will be free to retain their own belief and practice. What they have to decide is whether they are ready to be in a united church with those who believe, as

they do not, that infant baptism is in accordance with New Testament principles.

The only point at which I have serious misgivings relates to the position of one baptized in infancy who later desires baptism as a believer. Proposals for a personal reaffirmation in a service of immersion of the promises made on his behalf in infancy, which seemed to me a promising way of surmounting an anomalous situation, did not prove acceptable. Some Baptists said it was not baptism and rejected it; some paedobaptists said it was re-baptism and therefore inadmissible. The Plan is undesirably vague on this issue.

Otherwise I find nothing to which I conscientiously object, though some things I would wish different. And I find much that I welcome gratefully. Anyone who proposes to speak, write, or vote on the proposals should first procure and read at any rate the first of these documents.

HUGH MARTIN

The Baptists in Norfolk, by C. B. Jewson. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 7s. 6d.).

This is a fascinating book. It tells not only of the origins of the Norfolk Baptists and the life within their churches but also of the considerable contribution which many of them made to the life of the community—notably in Norwich. After a section on the Origins and Early Developments, Mr. Jewson goes on in Parts II and III to write of the Kinghorn Era 1739-1832, and of Victorian times. It was these two sections which the reviewer found of greatest interest. What an intriguing man Kinghorn must have been! Quite clearly, too, as Mr. Jewson says, the debate between Robert Hall and Joseph Kinghorn on the Communion question is relevant material for consideration in the present ecumenical age and it is, therefore, perhaps a pity that the author could not have devoted more space to the matter. The life of the Norfolk Baptists in Victorian times again is relevant today in view of the need for recapturing the ideal of Christian Citizenship. Time and again we hear of the Association or of local churches expressing clear and forthright opinions upon the matters of the day—and making certain that the resolutions reach influential people. How that concern needs to be recaptured today! The final section deals with the twentieth century and of the effect upon Baptist life of the wars, and upon Baptists and political life of the splitting of the radical movement into the Liberal and Labour Parties. The century shows too the decline of much of the family tradition for so long the backbone of Baptist life. Yet there is at least one exception to this decline and one which, for obvious reasons, receives all too little attention in this book, namely the "House of Jewson." The

contribution of this family to Baptist life like the story of the Norfolk Baptists themselves goes on. This latest contribution in book form is indeed a worthy one.

Yet there are many questions raised by this book which need answering. To mention but three from the first section. One would like to know how much in the earlier years of Elizabeth I the then Bishop of Norwich, the Puritan sympathiser and returned exile John Parkhurst, himself often in trouble with the Queen and Archbishop, encouraged what Mr. Jewson has called the "rising tide of Puritanism." One would like to know, too, more about the relationship of these Puritans to Robert Browne and the first Separatists, and of both these groups to the Anabaptists. Then again, had the religious emigrants from Norwich any contact soon after 1635 with the remnants of independent groups still in Holland? It is surely noteworthy that both the Yarmouth and Norwich churches of 1643 and 1644, made up of returned exiles, were covenant churches and wrote into their covenants an undoubted echo of the famous "further light and truth" clause of earlier independency.

One critical word must be written concerning the production of this book, which is, on the whole, so attractive, and that is its almost complete lack of references. The value of material cited in this book is immense and yet its usefulness to subsequent students of Baptist history is greatly lessened, in that there is little indication given of the primary sources from which it is gleaned. The answer can scarcely be that all the quotations are given from the secondary source of the Rev. M. F. Hewett's typescript. But even if many citations are given from the typescript some information is needed as to Mr. Hewett's sources and their availability. It is indeed a pity that so scholarly and interesting a book should have its usefulness limited in this way.

But when all this has been said Mr. Jewson's contribution to the history of East Anglian Baptists is considerable, and this book should be read by anyone interested in Baptist history.

W. M. S. WEST

The Organist's Guide to Congregational Praise, by Eric Routley. (Independent Press, London, 12s. 6d.).

The author, a minister and organist, has set out to provide for organists, notes upon the interpretation of all the hymns to be found in *Congregational Praise*. At first, one is tempted to ask whether such a formidable task is either necessary or desirable, but on reading the book the opinion is rapidly formed that Dr. Routley's racy notes can be of real value, provided the advice given in the foreword is taken to heart—"that the notes are here to start organists thinking, not to stop them thinking."

The author's basic belief that the interpretation of a hymn begins with a thorough understanding of the words cannot be too strongly stressed, and his enthusiastic recommendation of many fine tunes will, it is hoped, kindle a similar enthusiasm in his readers.

In an introductory chapter, valuable advice is given on the general principles of accompanying hymns.

For the organist at a Congregational church, who does not aspire to professional standards, this book ought to become a distinct acquisition.

KENNETH BARRITT

Early Bible Illustrations, by James Strachan. 86 pp. (text), plus 126 woodcuts, with notes and illustrations and an Appendix on the woodcuts of the "Great" Bible. (The Cambridge University Press, 18s. 6d.).

This is an altogether delightful little book. The work of an amateur in the truest sense of the word, it will be read with pleasure as much by the bibliophile and expert as by the casual reader. Mr. Strachan, a retired Inspector of Schools, is modest about his qualifications for writing it, but he has no need to be. Having been asked about some of the pictorial woodcuts in a copy of the "Great" Bible of Henry VIII which had once belonged to George Fox, he soon discovered that the greater part of the literature on the subject was in French and German and concluded that there was room for the sort of book he has now produced.

The ten chapters cover the period from the earliest printed pictures of 1415, notably from the *Ars Moriendi* and the *Biblia Pauperum*, to the end of the 16th century when the fashion for such illustrations began to die out. With no little skill, Mr. Strachan traces the history of the use of these woodcuts from one text to another. He shows, for instance, how the woodblocks used for the Great Cologne Bible, published by Heinrich Quentel between 1478 and 1480, fixed a style that prevailed for several generations, and he produces evidence to show that in those early days the actual blocks themselves were probably passed round from printer to printer. His detailed studies of the illustrations of the English Bibles of the 16th century have a special fascination.

In the main, the accompanying reproductions are excellent and where they fall short it is probably because of defective originals.

Although it is no part of the author's purpose, this book has something to say to those who are interested in the modern use of visual aids in the art of communication. But primarily it is a book just to enjoy.

W. J. BRADNOCK

The Seven Letters: Christ's Message to His Church, by Hugh Martin. (Carey Kingsgate Press, London, 7s. 6d.).

This excellent little book cannot but be of help to preacher and Bible student. It is well written and well documented, and presented with Dr. Martin's usual directness.

The author offers a free and independent translation of the text of the letters, and his opening chapters serve as a good introduction to this section of the Apocalypse. There is a good chapter on "Christ or Caesar" which gives the historical setting for the Seven Letters and passes to its modern parallels. Along these lines, Dr. Martin gives, within the limits of his space, an adequate commentary on each Letter and shows the relevance of each to the modern church. As he writes, explaining the abiding appeal of this part of the Apocalypse, "the Letters throw light on the life of the early church at the outset of the grim struggle with Rome," and they "proclaim picturesquely and forcefully truths of living and eternal validity for the Church today and in every age, and for the individual Christian."

W. S. DAVIES

An Essay of Accommodation, being a scheme for uniting Presbyterians and Congregationalists drawn up c. 1681. Dr. William's Library. Occasional Paper, No. 6, 3s. 9d.).

There is here printed for the first time a draft scheme prepared by London ministers in the closing years of Charles II's reign. It was not acted upon, probably because any such agreement would have brought further troubles on Dissenters; but it circulated among them in manuscript and must have been known to those who drew up the famous *Heads of Agreement* in 1691, when toleration had been secured. The *Essay* is here printed side by side with the *Heads of Agreement* and Mr. Royce Thomas, of the Dr. William's Trust, provides a brief introduction and some useful notes. This publication should be noted by students of the period and those interested in modern efforts to unite Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

ERNEST A. PAYNE