

1662 and 1962

ONE of the most valuable results of the commemoration of 1662 has been the publication of a volume, *From Uniformity to Unity*,¹ under the joint authorship of Geoffrey F. Nuttall and Owen Chadwick. A group of scholars from the Anglican communion and a group appointed by the Three Denominations independently began to plan books for this occasion and it speaks volumes for the progress of Christian trust that the two groups decided to unite their efforts. Most composite volumes suffer from inconsistencies of understanding and purpose but here a common loyalty to historical truth has brought about a remarkable unity.

The first four essays concentrate on various phases of the post-Restoration period. Dr. Anne Whitman deals with "The Church of England Restored." This is the essay in which Free Churchmen will find the point of view most unfamiliar. It is salutary for us to see the matter through Anglican eyes and to be reminded that "both Anglicans and Puritans in the prolonged controversies had difficulty in hearing the voice of charity and the arguments of reason." Prof. E. C. Ratcliff deals with the Savoy Conference, which was characterized by obduracy in plenty, not all of it Anglican, but the Conference's failure emerges here almost as a foregone conclusion, in view of the temper of the Cavalier Parliament.

Dr. Nuttall, in "The First Nonconformists," avoids the temptation to provide a martyrology while making clear the reason for the stand of the ejected ministers. One wishes, however, that this essay had been a little fuller in bringing home the personal cost of not conforming and the character of the religious communities that sprang up as a result. If any were under the delusion that 1662 represented the end of the story until the Act of Toleration, Roger Thomas' close study of the intervening period would prove him wrong. His object is to show how the aims of the various groups of Nonconformists varied, some seeking comprehension within a national church, others wanting only liberty to go their own way. An intriguing story is well told but perhaps Mr. Thomas might have ventured to draw slightly more general conclusions from his study.

The advantages of the composite nature of the book are most clearly seen in the double essay on "Toleration and Establishment." Dr. Payne deals with it clearly and concisely from the historian's view-point. It is unfortunate that the period allocated to him was a long one and the available space rather short, but the plan of the

¹ S.P.C.K. 35s.

book makes this inevitable. Dr. Payne's essay illuminates and highlights that of Dr. Edward Carpenter who gives a "study in a relationship." Particularly helpful is the manner in which Dr. Carpenter summarizes the response of ecclesiastical attitudes to the philosophy of the time.

In the final pair of essays, entitled "Towards Charity and Understanding," Bishop Oliver Tomkins sketches the ecumenical background in scholarly and readable fashion and John Huxtable discusses the conversations that have taken place in England. He may fairly claim to have demonstrated his contention that Anglicans now do not desire to disown their Free Church brethren and *vice versa*; nevertheless the overall picture left in our minds is that there is a long way to go. Would a fairer picture have been given if some instances of the practical effect of the change of atmosphere had been offered? One would have liked this volume to contain yet one more essay, tying up the two ends of the story. How does 1662 still speak to us? Does not the perspective of three hundred years enable us to say some things which would help forward a church still in sore need of wise guidance?

The little paper-backed volume by Dr. E. A. Payne and Norman S. Moon entitled *Baptists and 1662*² is in many ways the complement of *From Uniformity to Unity*. It is clearly designed to meet the criticism that "Baptists were not involved in the troubles of 1662." The abiding impression of Dr. Payne's description of those Baptists who were involved in the Great Ejection is one of affection and enthusiasm. Their numbers may not have been many but that does not make the strength of their convictions and their importance to us any less real. In the second half of the book Norman Moon gives us an account, with humour and sympathy, of the provisions of the Clarendon Code and their effect on Baptist church life; and does not fall into the error of assuming that all was well after 1689.

Baptists ought to read this, and also a third book which describes the reaction of Baptists to the church situation as it is developing in 1963. *With Hands Outstretched*³ is written by Dr. E. Roberts-Thompson, Principal of the Baptist Theological College of New South Wales. From a wide acquaintance with Baptist churches in all parts of the world he calls eloquently for a positive approach to the ecumenical movement and an end to the isolationist position that has characterized some of our churches for too long.

Dr. Roberts-Thompson is at pains to allay some of the suspicions that many Baptists have of the World Council of Churches, and to help us see that extreme independency is foreign to the New Testament ideal of the church, and to the ideal that inspired some of the first Baptists. He applauds the new approach to the sacra-

² C.K.P. 3s. 6d.

³ Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 12s. 6d.

ments that emphasizes the action of God, associated with the names of Wheeler Robinson and many of the younger generation of Baptists in this country. He defends those Baptists, particularly in the younger countries, who engage in discussions on church union, and pleads that the witness of Baptists to their undoubtedly Scriptural insights be made from within rather than from without the main stream of world church life. This book deserves a very wide circulation, not only among those who agree with its contents. It is courageous, practical and forthright, and may well be of very great influence. The new point of view among us has not been so resoundingly stated before.

Two weaknesses of this book, however, may cause it to be rejected unread by those who ought to read it. The first chapter is a clear but uncompromising statement of the general position adopted. It might have been wiser to begin with the chapters on William Carey and John Smyth and to show that an ecumenical spirit has characterized Baptists from the beginning. More seriously, one would like to see a fuller biblical exposition of the ideas in dispute. The author acknowledges the Scriptural test that Baptists apply and he uses the best results of modern scholarship, but he does not turn his readers to specific quotations that support his argument. The lack of such exegesis may make the book shorter and easier to read but it will detract greatly from its weight, particularly in those circles where the ideas will be new.

Christianity is moving towards a new day in church relations; the shape of things to come will be partly determined by the attitude of Baptists, and we need all the historical and practical insights we can get to help form an attitude which will prepare us for God's guiding. All these books will help to this end.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

- P. T. Forsyth, *The Church, the Gospel and Society*. 127 pp. 15s. Independent Press.
- H. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*. Second edition, enlarged. 489 pp. 15s. Oxford University Press.
- R. T. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the 19th Century*. 260 pp. 38s. Clarendon Press : Oxford University Press.