

Reviews

George H. Williams: *The Radical Reformation*. 924 pp. 70s.
Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

In a sense it just isn't fair that one man should have the ability, the time and the resources to produce so remarkable a book as this! For make no mistake about it, this is a remarkable book. It is remarkable for its length—865 pages of text—I imagine nearly 300,000 words. It is remarkable for its scope—radical reform throughout the whole of Europe from the time of the Reformation to the end of the sixteenth century, and with many glances into the seventeenth. It is remarkable for the accuracy and detail of its scholarship—one loses count of the number of theses (published and unpublished) which the author has read. And so one could go on.

But what is the book all about? It describes the complex of movements which developed alongside the main Reformation streams in Germany or in Switzerland. This complex Dr. Williams designates "The Radical Reformation."

No reviewer can do justice to this book which is essential to any library with an Ecclesiastical History section and for any serious student of the Reformation. Dr. Williams provides us not only with the history of the radicals, but also with much of their theology and an interpretation of the effect of such theology. Let the author speak for himself as to the purpose of the book:

It would be premature to attempt at this stage a definitive account of the Radical Reformation. Nevertheless, the general reader in Reformation history is entitled to have before him a rough outline of the picture shaping up in the minds of the spectators. Even the specialists may be helped at this point in their archival and monographic burrowing by coming out for a moment to blink at the scene as a whole. (p. xix).

In classifying the Radical Reformation Dr. Williams follows the divisions which he tentatively suggested in the introduction to the volume, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation and Evangelical Catholicism* (S.C.M. Press), of which he was the joint editor with A. M. Mergal. These groups are discussed again in the introduction to the book under review, and show continual overlapping. No doubt Dr. Williams' attempt at classification is not the final word, and one feels just as sure that he will be amongst the first to applaud Walter Klaassen's recent attempt (*Mennonite Quarterly Review*, April 1963) to show that an entirely new approach is required to such classification.

To read the contents list of this book is rather like reading the

itinerary of an ecclesiastical coach tour which "does" Europe. Beginning with chapters on Reformed Catholicity and the Netherlandish Sacramentists, Dr. Williams moves straight into Carlstadt and Müntzer, and from them we are guided by a sure hand through the Peasants' War and the Eucharistic Controversy to the Rise of Anabaptism amongst the Swiss Brethren, then out again into South Germany, Austria, Switzerland and on to Moravia, up to North Germany to the disaster at Münster and the subsequent regrouping under Menno Simons, back again to the beginning and out again to Poland, Lithuania and Silesia—and so on through 865 pages.

The history is all there. Anabaptism in England, for example, is dealt with concisely—yet with all the known facts. This subject illustrates a further merit of the book, namely its cross references. When Dr. Williams has dealt with Anabaptism in England up to 1540 we are then told in the text exactly at what section of what chapter this topic will be resumed. This, together with subject headings on every page (lamentably unlike the new *Baptist Hymn Book*), makes it possible to follow a topic through the book without constant reference to the index.

The theology is there, too. There is a section on baptismal theologies of the Radical Reformation and a careful discussion of the doctrines on which the orthodoxy of certain radical groups have always been suspect—namely the Person of Christ and the Trinity. There is also a thorough discussion of marriage in the Radical Reformation and a stimulating chapter on Law and Gospel: Sectarian Ecumenicity. In this chapter Dr. Williams deals with the relationship between the Bible and the Holy Spirit and also the implications of the denial by most of the radicals of the parity of the two Testaments and the unity of the Old and New covenantal people.

From the point of view of browsers rather than those interested in the details of the Radical Reformation, chapter 33, "The Radical Reformation: a New Perspective" will be of great value. A few sentences from the beginning of this chapter deserve quotation as an example both of the basic judgments which this book enters and of the picturesque American style in which the author often writes.

The Radical Reformation was a tremendous movement at the core of Christendom during the three score years following Luther's three great Reformation tracts of 1520. Embracing peasants and princes, artisans and aristocrats, devout wives and disillusioned humanists, it was as much an entity as the Reformation itself and the Counter Reformation. . . . The Radical Reformation drained the brackish pools and opened the sluices for innumerable religious currents long impounded in the interstices of medieval Christendom, which were set in torrential motion by the upthrusts of solid blocks of Reformed territories under kings, princes, and the magistrates of numerous city-states. (p. 846).

After showing how two of the basic tenets of most of the Radicals (believers' baptism and sleep of souls) are taught now by Karl Barth, and how a third (separation of church and state) is basic to American life, and how a fourth (the great Missionary Commission) is shared by all Protestantism, Dr. Williams concludes :

In the fullness of time, the true martyrs among the Radicals may come to be counted by all as revered members of that larger church, which is the communion of saints, the elect of every nation. (p. 864).

Dr. Williams goes a long way to hastening the day of such acceptance and we are all greatly in his debt.

W. M. S. WEST

L. T. C. Rolt : *Thomas Newcomen : The Pre-history of the Steam Engine*. 158 pp. 25s. David and Charles, Devon

This is a book about a "practical tradesman"—to use the author's own description—who was more than a first class craftsman. It has obviously been written by an enthusiastic admirer and will doubtless be warmly welcomed by those who, like Mr. Rolt, feel that Thomas Newcomen has not yet been accorded anything like the credit due to him for the important part he played in the invention and development of the steam engine.

It is clear that Newcomen did not seek recognition during his lifetime, even after he had satisfactorily proved the efficacy of his steam engine. An attempt to honour his name and achievement whilst maintaining a reputation for historical accuracy and doing justice to those with whom he was closely associated, as well as those who followed him, has not, therefore, been an easy task. Mr. Rolt has freely acknowledged that the sparsity of solid fact has necessitated much surmise; that the general impression conveyed by the book is one of fair comment and deduction is to his credit.

It would seem that the author has gone to considerable lengths to include references to as many Newcomen type engines as possible and passages dealing with working techniques and constructional details are, in consequence, many and varied. It would have been good to read more about the man himself. Mr. Rolt has established that Newcomen was christened in an Anglican church in Dartmouth in 1663; all later references confirm his staunch adherence to the Baptist cause, both as a lay preacher and, for a time, as lay pastor of a Dartmouth Baptist fellowship which worshipped in his home. It is particularly interesting to read how, after years of experiment and near failure, when Newcomen was unable to enlist the practical support needed to enable him to prove the value and effectiveness of his invention in the West Country, success was achieved in the Midlands as a result of the backing he received from fellow Baptists there.

The engineer and the student of transport today may, on reading this book, reflect on the extent to which new ideas and inventions are accorded a more favourable reception than they were 300 years ago. Baptists, however, are indebted to Mr. Rolt for this permanent memorial to one whom it would have been a privilege to know; master craftsman and inventor as he undoubtedly was, the letter to his wife reproduced opposite page 121—written two years before his death at the age of 65—is a remarkable testimony to his faith and belief, and clearly demonstrates how little store Thomas Newcomen set upon the treasures of this world.

W. H. ROPER

H. G. May and B. M. Metzger (eds.): *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1,544 pp. and maps. 57s. 6d. Oxford University Press.

Bruce M. Metzger and Isobel M. Metzger (eds.): *The Oxford Concise Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of The Holy Bible*, 158 pp., 10s. 6d. Oxford University Press.

The Oxford Pocket R.S.V. Reference Bible (Moroccoette), 45s. Oxford University Press.

J. Hastings (ed.): *One Volume Dictionary of the Bible*. Revised by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley. 1,059 pp. and maps. £5 T. & T. Clark.

Now that the Revised Standard Version has won its place in the hearts of the British people it is not surprising that aids to understanding it are now beginning to appear. Three books on these lines have appeared within a month.

The Oxford Annotated Bible is the longest and most comprehensive. It consists of the full text, plus notes in a good, clear type, but adds a short introduction and running commentary to each of the books. There are also summary articles dealing with the Introduction to the Old and New Testaments, geography, history, archæology, and the English versions. There is a table of weights and measures in the Bible, a chronological table of rulers in Biblical times, and no fewer than twelve maps. The contributors are mainly American, though H. H. Rowley has contributed one article on how to read the Bible, and names like B. W. Anderson, Shermon E. Johnson and B. M. Metzger are well known over here.

Whilst intended for the general reader rather than the specialist, many ministers will find this a useful tool, and considering the price one has to pay for the text alone, this is excellent value for money for the lay-preacher or Sunday School teacher.

For those people who have been brought up on the R.S.V., and who therefore tend to recall texts in that form, there is a useful aid in the *Concise Concordance*, though this is selective rather than comprehensive, and again, intended for the general reader. It is printed much more clearly than most other concordances.

Where ministers have begun to use the R.S.V. in the pulpit,

many church members who used to follow the readings are conscious of the limitation, yet feel unable to transport the large volumes to and from the church. By these, the new pocket R.S.V. will be found invaluable. It is printed on India paper, measures $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins. \times $6\frac{1}{2}$ ins., has central column references, a particularly clear type (not too small) and is sold with a cellophane jacket, complete with box. I have known some pockets and many handbags into which this would fit quite easily! The price seems high but this is because of the quality of the product.

Further evidence for the way in which the Revised Standard Version is winning its way in this country is provided by the appearance of a revised edition of James Hastings one volume *Dictionary of the Bible*, based on the R.S.V. (whereas the first edition was based on the R.V.) but with cross-references to both A.V. and R.V. The fruit of the labours of 150 British and American scholars, the revisers assure us that no article has been re-inserted without careful scrutiny by an expert. Most have been revised and brought up to date, many have been re-written completely, and some new ones have been added. The maps are the same as those in the recent revised edition of Peake's Commentary.

New articles include one on the Ras Shamra Tablets, giving an account of their excavation and their relationship with the Old Testament, one on the Dead Sea Scrolls, giving in less than two columns an account of their discovery, a summary of the findings, a sketch of the life of the Qumran community, and a comment on the significance of the Scrolls for biblical studies, and a special article all to itself on Worship.

Additions to older articles include an extension on the "English Versions" so as to include the American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible and modern versions published by individuals; an account of the work of Gunkel, Mowinckel and the Scandinavian schools on the "Psalms," and an extra paragraph under "King," "The King as Yahweh's Vice-regent," reflecting modern studies on sacral kingship.

The changed climate in biblical studies during the last 50 years is reflected in the seven columns given to the theology of John and twelve and a half columns to Paul's, as well as in the complete re-styling of the sections introducing the books of the Bible ("The Gospel according to St. Mark" is a good example of this).

But who can tell where to stop? Or, for that matter, where to start? For what appeals to one man will so readily be missed by another as his interest takes him to other pastures. Only consistent use over a period can fully establish the value of this new edition, but first impressions suggest that it will live up to, and even surpass, the high reputation which the first edition has won for itself.

A. GILMORE

E. A. Payne : *Veteran Warrior : A Memoir of B. Grey Griffith*, 64 pp. 4s. Carey Kingsgate Press.

“ He was a man, take for all in all ;
We shall not look upon his like again.”

This couplet quoted at the end of Dr. Ernest Payne's brilliant biography of B.G.G. expresses the author's conviction and that of all who knew this remarkable man. Grey Griffith was a warrior from his youth and in this volume he is entrancingly set forth. The first half is the more exciting, telling of Grey's preparation for, and work in the pastorate, notably at Cardiff. In the second part the reader follows his outstanding work for our Missionary Society leading up to the climax of his life-long activity, at the Baptist Union and in wider circles. To the interests listed may be added his valuable service in the interests of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship. Those who knew our brother beloved will value this tribute, while younger ministers, for years to come, will be inspired by its amazing record.

S. G. MORRIS

K. S. Latourette : *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age. Vol. IV. The Twentieth Century in Europe: the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches.* 568 pp. 63s. Eyre & Spottiswoode.

A general once said to his staff officers : “ Gentlemen, you must use bigger maps.” That necessity has also been laid on students of Church History since the World Church became “ the great new fact of our time ” and Dr. Latourette holds a place of pre-eminence among those who can think and write in global dimensions. It has indeed been said that in its range and perspective his work marks such a turning point that in days to come Church historians will be describable as pre- or post-Latourette ! Be that as it may we have long passed the stage where a volume from his pen needs recommendation; it need only be said that the familiar qualities are here in evidence once again, among them his remarkable capacity for managing and marshalling vast quantities of data.

In this volume the field of operations is Europe and the *terminus a quo* is 1914. The Eastern Church is not left out but the Roman and Protestant Churches get the lion's share of space. For the Roman Church Dr. Latourette has adopted a chapter by chapter treatment of various aspects such as the place of the papacy, worship and devotional life, and so on. For Protestantism he has found it easier to move from country to country. The scene as a whole is, of course, a very different one from that which he had to depict in

the preceding volumes. He found the 19th century "in some ways the greatest that Christianity had ever known" and yet, if the optimism of that era has gone and if the 20th century has brought major problems and threats, he also finds important indications of the vitality and influence of Christianity in the modern world.

The criticisms to be offered are marginal. Inevitably there are places at which the account tends to become something of a catalogue; inevitably also some persons and some aspects of the period tend to get more or less attention than another writer might have given or than some readers would want. Objectivity and fairness are two of the author's great and characteristic qualities but at times they almost seem to pass into Olympian detachment. On the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary, for example, it would not have been unjust to point out its total lack of warrant and its gratuitous, untimely widening of the gulf between Protestant and Catholic. Did not certain Roman theologians complain of those very things before the formal promulgation of the dogma required their obedience? It is a little surprising to find the Papal throne described more than once as "the Fisherman's chair." If this implies an affirmative verdict on Rome's claim for Peter as first bishop one can but register disagreement; if not it seems a misleading usage to adopt. But none of these remarks detract from one's admiration and gratitude to the scholar who continues to put the entire Christian world in his debt.

G. W. RUSLING

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