

Reviews

The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology, by Ernest Best. Cambridge University Press. 1965. Pp. xiv, 222. 32s. 6d.

Dr. Best, lecturer in Biblical Literature and Theology at St. Andrews, has set out to write a polemic monograph upon the soteriology of Mark. What results is inevitably far more; it is a study of the Gospel which embraces to greater or lesser extent all its major concerns, although, unlike a textual commentary, it has a single focus.

Best disagrees with the interpretation of the work of Christ in Mark offered by J. M. Robinson, G. Hebert, J. Kallas and others, namely, that the career of Jesus is to be understood as an unremitting struggle against the forces of darkness culminating in the final struggle of the Cross. On the contrary, declares Best, Mark presents us with *one* decisive struggle between Jesus and Satan, that in the desert, and the remainder of the story sees Jesus engaged in what are but mopping up operations where Satan is concerned. They become peripheral to the main concern of Mark's Jesus, which is to declare and exemplify the gospel of forgiveness and to prepare the understanding of His followers for the passion which is to come. It is the Cross which is the central theme of the Gospel, and its meaning for Mark is that :

"The Cross is judgment . . . borne by Jesus . . . His blood is shed for others as his life is given for them . . . this is to bring men into the new community which is formed out of the Cross and Resurrection from those who are saved, enjoy the forgiveness of their sin and themselves go to seek others as fishers of men."

In this way, argues Best, Mark is seen as choosing the soteriology represented by 1 Cor. 15:3-4 as against that represented by Phil. 2:5-11.

Certain questions arise in connexion with this thesis. Does not this put very great weight upon what is, in Mark, the testimony of one verse only, 1:12? Best replies that the outcome of the desert conflict is to be found in the statement concerning the binding of Satan at 3:27, and that the story shows Jesus operating against Satan from a secure position of victory. Then from what source does difficulty come for Jesus if not from Satan? Best replies that evil comes against Jesus from men's hearts and malicious acts and not from Satan, and that if later theology regarded all evil as Satanic in origin, this is not Mark's viewpoint. Again, if the Cross is not a struggle against Satan, what is its meaning? We have already quoted Best's answer here, and he derives it from a close

examination of what may be estimated to be the specially Markan elements in the Gospel—the “seams”, the selection of the material, the ordering of it, the titles of Jesus that are emphasised and the like. Finally, if Jesus vanquished Satan in the desert, why do the early Christians find him so active against them? Best claims that the whole of the NT is in a difficulty here; that there is an unresolved tension between the proclamation that Jesus is a victorious Lord and the bitterness with which the vanquished is permitted to assail the Church.

The usefulness of this book lies not only in the chief thesis but also in the penetrating way in which so much of the Gospel material is explained. Inevitably one is not always satisfied with Best's conclusions in matters of detail but he makes his reader work assiduously and the labour is rewarding. James Denney once wrote, “I haven't the faintest interest in theology which does not help us to evangelise”. Best has pressed us to see the evangelical concern and purpose behind Mark's story, and the scholar-preacher is assisted in his tasks as he follows Best's arguments.

E. BRUCE HARDY

A History of Protestantism: Volume I. The Reformation, by E. G. Léonard. London. Nelson. 1966. Pp. xiv, 351, 4 maps, 77 pages of bibliography, two indices. 90s.

Whilst until recently there was a serious dearth of first class studies of the Reformation available in English, during the last two or three years a stream of useful works has tumbled on to the desks of historians working in this period. This volume provides a useful general introduction to the subject by a continental scholar of eminence and deals with the history of the Reformation from 1517-1564 in some 350 pages of narrative. About two-thirds of this is dominated by the development of Luther and Lutheranism and the remainder is concerned in part with the Catholic reaction and in part with the work of John Calvin.

One great interest in such a work as this lies in reflection upon the judgments and insights it embodies which are the product of the mature and profound scholarship of its author. It is not without significance that, at the close of a lifetime of study, Professor Léonard insisted that one of his basic principles and guiding themes was the conviction that (p. 4) “the Reformation, far more than a revolt against Catholic faith, was its culmination and full flowering”. Similarly, there is food for thought in his statement that the reason why Protestantism proved almost irresistible in the first generation was because (p. 258) “it was at first a movement of faith which an institution could do little to combat”.

However, those interested in the English Reformation will be disappointed to find the treatment restricted to a very few pages and ended with the death of Henry VIII. Similarly, the small

attention given to the Reformation radicals suggests that their activities did not interest the author as did the Magisterial Reformers. On the whole, whilst the study of Luther and Lutheranism is attractive and workmanlike, there can be little doubt that he is most sympathetic to Calvin — Calvin who could not abide “amateurism” in any sphere, Calvin who loved order and who created such a formidable system of theology.

A word must now be said about the bibliography to which about one-sixth of this very expensive book has been given up. Such a daunting list of works in English, German, French and Italian, can hardly be for the general reader : yet for the specialist there are hardly any works listed after 1959 and the coverage at several points is uneven. A new edition with a select bibliography might save a great deal of money and ensure this valuable and constructive work a larger sale and a larger reading public. It is certainly a book to be read : not all can afford to buy it.

B. R. WHITE

Baptists in New Jersey: A study in Transition, by Norman H. Maring. The Judson Press. 1964. Pp. 379. \$3.50.

“History is an extension of memory”, says Professor Maring in a significant sentence early in this important book, “and memory is essential to a sense of identity—whether for an individual or for a group.” With this in mind he has here set himself to tell at length the story of Baptists in New Jersey. Three-hundred years ago a sparsely settled colony where Indians roved the woods, it is now the most densely populated and highly urbanised state in the Union. Professor Maring, of Eastern Theological Seminary, is now one of the leading Church historians of America and this study is a welcome addition to our knowledge of the development of denominational affairs. It should find a place in all College and University libraries.

The British reader is naturally interested in comparing developments on this side of the Atlantic. Professor Maring's main divisions are closely similar to those used by most of those who have studied events in this country. He began with the period 1688 to 1740, for it was not until 1688 that a Baptist Church was organized in Middletown, one of the first towns laid out by early settlers. When the Philadelphia Baptist Association was formed in 1707 it consisted of three New Jersey and two Pennsylvanian Churches. To the years 1740 to 1790 the title “Revivals and Revolutions” is given, while 1790-1820 is treated under the title “Signs of Awakening”. A separate New Jersey Association was formed by twelve churches in 1811, and of the thirty-three delegates at the historic General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States in 1814—the Triennial Convention as it came to be called—nine were from New Jersey. This was still the

day of small things and so it continued for several decades. In 1830 the New Jersey Association became the New Jersey Convention, but the delegates the following year numbered only thirty-two.

Professor Maring devotes three chapters to the period from 1820 to 1865, and entitles them "Efforts to do Good", "Growing Pains", and "Social Reforms and Education". The "Society" epoch began, but there were anti-mission Baptists (though not as many in New Jersey as in the States to the south) and the issue of slavery was a divisive one. The transformation in American Baptist fortunes—as indeed in those of the other denominations—has come since the Civil War. The years 1865 to 1890 saw "Transition to an Industrial Age" and in the process a great increase in population and the movement of population. Immigrants arrived in increasing numbers and variety. The Churches found themselves "Evangelising a procession". In spite of controversies over closed or open communion, the use of fermented wine at communion and the rights of women, Baptists began to feel so confident that in 1886 the New Jersey Convention "Resolved . . . that the hope of the Salvation of the world, lies largely—under God—in the hands of American Baptists". (In 1911 one of the district associations welcomed "the coming establishment of Universal peace among the nations of the earth".)

Three important chapters cover the period 1890 to 1918. Growth and prosperity led to the demand for greater efficiency and the use of the methods favoured by Big Business. Laymen—and chief among them Francis Wayland Ayer—devoted their talents and financial resources to the strengthening of the Convention. Ayer's advocacy of a Sustentation Fund for ministerial salaries began in 1892. But as organisation increased, the effective life of district associations declined and subtle changes came in the rôle of the pastors who had now to lead and administer a varied programme of activities. Moreover, there was a weakening of denominational consciousness, due in part to the swiftly changing character of the population, but due also to the growth of individualistic and subjective views of authority. "To say, as was so commonly stated in the latter part of the 19th century and thereafter, that creeds and confessions were contrary to the Baptist genius was historically inaccurate", Professor Maring notes. "When individualism had been allowed to run rampant so that every man became his own authority—and when such a view came to be considered the distinctive principle of the Baptists—it was almost impossible any longer to define the term 'Baptist'." Changing views of the Bible and a growing concern about social issues were at the same time preparing the way for later breaches and tribulations. Professor Maring ascribes to the rise of Bible schools and the use of the Scofield Bible the fact that there was growing opposition to pro-

gressive theological trends and that "many people began to identify premillennial expectations of the Second Advent with traditional Baptist theology".

The penultimate chapter—"Economic and Religious Depression 1919-1948"—makes sad reading but it deserves careful attention in this country as a cautionary tale. British Baptists may well have been fortunate that the Down Grade Controversy occurred in the 1880s and was conducted on the whole, so temperately and with so obvious a desire to avoid the disruption of the Union. But there have been signs recently that a few are ready to increase tensions and to provoke separation.

The years after World War I were difficult ones for American Baptists. The Interchurch World Movement was an over-optimistic mammoth effort on behalf of missions and education which collapsed at the very time there came an open split between "Fundamentalists" and "Modernists". Professor Maring notes that the term "Fundamentalism" was coined among Northern Baptists in 1920 by a group seeking to be conciliatory to avoid any withdrawal of support from denominational institutions and agencies. But it was adopted by others and soon became a general label for "the whole conservative wing of Christianity" (though many who describe themselves as "conservatives" are now anxious to repudiate it because of the company in which it lands them). The Great Depression, reaction against the Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry and the activities of the dissident Presbyterian, Carl McIntyre, completed the misfortunes of New Jersey Baptists as of those in many northern states. The final break in the Northern Baptist Convention came in 1946 and thereafter a considerable exodus from the state and national conventions took place right across the country. By 1963, over sixty churches had left the New Jersey Convention and had joined either the General Association of Regular Baptists or the so-called Conservative Baptists. There has been what Professor Maring describes as "a blight upon the life of the convention".

"Perhaps the gulf might have been bridged", says Professor Maring, "had it not been for extremists on both sides of the theological fence." He notes in particular the way in which disaffected pastors have spread seeds of distrust among the members of their congregations, causing them to separate from the main stream of denominational fellowship and activity. Though he hopes that the process of erosion has at last been halted, it is only with some hesitation that he can speak in his closing paragraphs of "grounds for encouragement and hope". The defections since 1946 have made it much more difficult for Baptists—to whatever "Party" they think they belong—to play their part in facing the

challenges of the second half of the 20th century. Let British Baptists beware !

All in all, this is a notable study, for which all interested in Baptist History must be deeply grateful. It is a book to be read, marked and inwardly digested.

ERNEST A. PAYNE

The Child and the Church : A Baptist Discussion. Carey Kingsgate Press, 1966. 3s. 6d.

One of the most encouraging features of Baptist life in the British Isles over the past decade has been the revival of serious theological thinking, evidenced in important books on the doctrines of Believers' Baptism and the Church. Unfortunately, however, we have been so concerned to safeguard the principle of a regenerate church membership that we have tended to neglect any detailed consideration of the status of the congregation and of children in particular. We have so concentrated on what we believe to be the error of paedo-baptists that our theological position regarding those who have as yet made no open profession of faith has been largely negative ; and this has resulted in what appears to most of our fellow Christians to be a truncated view of the Church. At the same time we ourselves have been left with the legacy of a sharp division between Church and Sunday School, the disastrous practical consequences of which scarcely need emphasising.

It is the merit of the statement recently published by the Carey-Kingsgate Press that some of the theological issues underlying the relationship of the child to the Church have been clearly brought to the fore. The document is the result of the work of a study group under the chairmanship of the Rev. Geoffrey Rusling established by the Baptist Union Council at the request of its Young People's Department. The members of this group have not been afraid to face controversial theological issues, and they have not fallen into the trap of making practical suggestions about the reformation of Sunday Schools and Youth Organisations without examining fundamental presuppositions.

The statement falls into two parts. The first twenty-nine pages outline the theological questions which the members of the group believe have to be faced, and the remaining fifteen pages are devoted to the implications of the conclusions reached for church practice. A select bibliography is appended. Few will quarrel with the general suggestions about changes in approach and method sketched in the final section ; it is patently obvious that the practices of a bygone day are totally inadequate to the second half of the 20th century, and that countless children have been lost to open discipleship and active church membership by our failure to face the contemporary situation realistically. But the authors of the state-

ment forcefully maintain that we cannot make much progress with practical reforms until we have cleared the theological ground, and it is what they have to say about this that will strike many Baptists as unfamiliar and disturbing. In his brief foreword Dr. Payne points out that "the theological emphasis in certain parts of the statement would appear to be Arminian and to favour general redemption rather than traditional Calvinism". It is, however, questionable whether many modern Baptists have really faced either alternative. The commonest view amongst us seems to be that our relationship with God depends entirely on our personal profession of faith : an individualistic doctrine of "works" which not only excludes the congregation from the sphere of divine grace, but virtually ignores the Calvinistic insistence on God as the author of the salvation of believers. We have to work out our theology in the context of divine grace and, once this is recognised, the status of what is called "the catechumenate" is an inescapable issue. This is the crucial question which Mr. Rusling and his colleagues have rightly forced upon our attention.

My own hesitation about their presentation is whether they have gone far enough in exposing the theological difficulties with which Baptists should be wrestling. They assume all too easily that faith is capable of precise definition and that an open profession in baptism is an unambiguous dividing line between believers and non-believers. What have they to say about the large numbers of names that are removed from our church rolls every year? On the other side of the line, what account is to be given of the incipient faith of those who have not reached the point of open profession? In any case, does profession of faith in baptism have the same content for all who submit to the rite? I take it that the great majority of Baptists would agree that subscription to a form of words is far from an adequate criterion.

In the second place, our Baptist individualism needs to be seriously re-examined not only in the light of the biblical doctrine of the covenant, to which the authors of the report draw attention, but in the light of the sociological facts about man in his inter-relationship with his fellows on which recent study has focussed fresh attention. Those with missionary experience overseas, notably in tribal areas, have had to come to terms with the fact that individuals can hardly be converted in isolation from one another. This question of the relation of the individual to his social group is one that raises perplexing problems for Baptists which we have as yet scarcely begun to tackle.

The authors of *The Child and the Church* would doubtless agree that they have been able to do no more than begin to open up a large field of enquiry. It would be most unfortunate if anyone were to take their report as the last word on the subject or even as

finally mapping the territory that has to be explored. They have made a beginning, but no more ; though for this we should be profoundly grateful.

P. R. CLIFFORD

Teilhard de Chardin, by Bernard Towers. London. Carey-Kingsgate Press. 1966. Pp. 45. 6s.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pilgrim of the Future. Edited by Neville Braybrooke. Darton, Longman and Todd. London. 1965. Pp. 128. 6s. 6d.

During recent years, the philosophical foundations of modern science have been much discussed while the philosophy of Nature has been largely neglected. It is not easy to think of any important English book on the subject published since R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of Nature* which appeared in 1945. Perhaps one of the reasons why Teilhard's book *The Phenomenon of Man* aroused so much interest was that it made an unusual attempt to look at the problem of man in the context of a natural philosophy which took account of evolution and of Christian theology. Teilhard insists that we have not taken evolution seriously ; it is not sufficient to confine it to those areas which are the special provinces of the sciences of life, while we regard the rest of the universe as static and fixed. The whole universe is developing, and not only developing : it is progressing toward an end which is disclosed by the Christian revelation.

Mr. Towers' book gives us a useful account of Teilhard's life, and nine pages on his thought. The brevity of the latter section is partly explained by reference to Teilhard's scientific and philosophical ideas in the biography. There is also a short list of his works available in English. It could be wished that even in so short a book the exposition could have been fuller and more detailed. Teilhard's language is often difficult and his thought is not likely to be attractive to readers with an English scientific and philosophical background, so that the more help we have towards understanding the better. Mr. Towers is an enthusiast ; he thinks that one day Teilhard's name will be linked with that of Aquinas. Perhaps ; or with Giordano Bruno's ?

The book edited by Mr. Braybrooke consists of fourteen essays drawn from a wide range of sources. The first two, *Christ in Matter* and *The Meaning and Constructive Value of Suffering*, are by Teilhard himself. The essays vary considerably in subject, scope and importance. D. M. MacKinnon draws attention to the importance of Teilhard's spirituality in *Le Milieu Divin* for the philosophy of religion, and Geoffrey Wagner finds that Romain Gary presents his philosophy as that of Tassin in his novel *The Roots of Heaven*.

G. J. M. PEARCE