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Reviews

John Knox, by Jasper Ridley. Oxford University Press. 1968. pp. 596. 60s.

Mr. Ridley, who has already published biographies of his ancestor Nicholas Ridley and of Archbishop Cranmer, has now produced a rather larger but very attractive study of John Knox. In this book the Scots reformer appears as an organizer of revolution who, although an astute political realist, was devoted to the protestant cause because he unquestioningly identified it, even when he had come to know some of his allies rather well, with the cause of Christ. Nevertheless, while some old slanders are firmly refuted in this book and its author's attitude is generally sympathetic to Knox, this carefully balanced exposition is far from being uncritical either of him or of his policies.

Similarly, while it is here made clear that it was largely due to John Knox that the Reformation in his country was given a presbyterian rather than an 'Anglican' colour, it is made equally clear that, from the standpoint of power politics, it was the support given by Elizabeth of England that made the Scots Reformation possible. Furthermore, the reader is shown that it was Knox—who, in spite of having gone into print *for* revolution by the people in the interests of the Reformation and *against* the rule of a woman, cherished his links with England and with the English government. It was, oddly enough, the English envoy to the Scots reformers who gave the famous testimony that Knox's preaching (p. 396) "is able, in one hour, to put more life in us than 500 trumpets continually blustering in our ears."

Mr. Ridley has been concerned to stress the importance of a certain flexibility in Knox's thinking which allowed him to give wise and rather worldly advice to the protestant leaders in Scotland. But his book also underlines the entirely shocking sound, to most Sixteenth Century ears—including those of Knox's master, John Calvin—of the former's justification of popular rebellion for the sake of reformation. A careful distinction is made between Knox's views and even the final position which Calvin reluctantly came to take. Another dimension was also given to his narrative when Mr. Ridley drew attention to the gradual change among many leading Scots protestants during the long struggle from their early genuinely religious fervour to their later almost blatant self-seeking. Even Knox, who never lost his primary commitment, seems to have grown more bitter and, perhaps, less scrupulous as the campaign, and his own life, wore on.

Occasionally, generally on theological matters peripheral to the author's main interests, the detailed background of his narrative has become a little blurred: the summary account of the 'Freewillers' and

'Familists' in Kent under Edward VI (p. 126), although not notably more confused than in some other books, hardly does justice either to the complexity of the situation discussed or to the substantial orthodoxy of the 'Freewillers' themselves. On the other hand it is useful to have Knox's two known encounters with 'Anabaptists' set in their proper biographical context. One took place during the last winter of Edward's reign with an extremist (p. 126 ff.) and, as is pointed out, one of the oddest things about the whole affair is that John Knox neither denounced him to the authorities then nor later. The other encounter was with a booklet which has long been supposed to have had Robert Cook (or Cooche) as its author—Mr. Ridley, unfortunately, has no new information here—which Knox answered with *An answer to a great number of blasphemous cavillations written by an Anabaptist* (Geneva, 1560).

This book would be valuable to readers of the *Quarterly* because it does much to make John Knox's career intelligible and to show that this rather unpopular reformer was far more human and far less rigid than some anti-puritan caricatures have made him. It is, for example, significant that while Knox was unquestionably an enthusiast for 'the discipline' the record of the sessions at St. Andrew's when he was there suggested his court was (p. 371) 'more lenient than most.'

B. R. WHITE.

American Baptists—Whence and Whither. N. H. Maring, Valley Forge, Pa. Judson Press. 1968. pp. 127. \$2.50.

This book gets better as it goes along. It starts with an account of Baptist beginnings out of the European Reformation which is very over-simplified and does less than justice to the pit from which even American Baptists were hewn. There is a passing reference to Luther, and not even that for Hubmaier.

British Baptists will find the description of their origins in these islands equally sketchy, but they are, after all, merely incidental to the main theme of the book, which is the history, witness and challenge of the American Baptists. And here one must remember that 'American Baptists' in this context are not Baptists in the U.S.A. generally, but those who belong to the American Baptist Convention, which has its headquarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

The story of the Convention's life and work is well told and in the process one begins to see its distinctive characteristics among the other great American Baptist bodies such as the immense Southern Convention, the various Negro Conventions and the ethnic Conventions which originally served immigrants from various European countries.

The American Convention came into being, like our own Baptist Union, partly for the better support of foreign missions. There was also the scandal of individual philanthropic and evangelistic societies competing with one another to get support from the churches. Centralization in some form was inevitable, and the Convention was born.

The author deals frankly with the theological problems which have marked the development of the Convention, and British Baptists may feel grateful that they have been spared some of the worst features of intolerant Fundamentalism as it has shown itself in the U.S.A.

The various agencies of the Convention are described, and one gets the picture of a highly-organized and efficient denomination operating on many fronts in the modern world.

It is interesting to note that, like ourselves, American Baptists are searching for a new sense of purpose in Association life. But can we feel that the author is expressing anything like our problem when he concludes with great certainty that much of the spiritual apathy of the churches is due to open-membership?

Mr. Maring sees the Convention as such as inevitable and beneficial, but is still cautious about too much centralization and the loss of the autonomy of the local church. Yet if in this he tends to be old-fashioned he has a good word for the ecumenical movement and hopes American Baptists will become increasingly involved in it.

There are useful questions at the end of each chapter which, with a little imagination, could be used by discussion-groups in this country.

For anyone who wants to understand Baptists in the U.S.A. in general and the American Convention in particular, this is a book worth looking at.

IRWIN BARNES.

Parson, Parish and Patron: Appointments to Benefices in the Church of England. A study prepared by a group working under the chairmanship of M. W. McQueen. Abingdon: the Marcham Manor Press. November 1968. 132 pp. 22s. 6d.

Parochial patronage in England is as old as the parish system. In this land of villages, the typical village church, like the heathen shrine it replaced, was maintained and owned by a Saxon then who appointed the priest and provided glebe and tithes. If the estate was saleable, so was the church. Hence the struggle over Investitures had its analogue at the grass-roots. Finally, in the year of the Great Charter, the fight for episcopal institution was won at the Fourth Lateran Council. This made the parson, once instituted, secure against the patron, whose right of appointment nevertheless remained almost absolute, since he was not unreasonably regarded as the voice of the local church, embracing the whole village community.

Seven centuries later, most parishes are neither rural nor communities. Only a sixth of patrons are private individuals; still fewer reside locally; but all over England parish priests are presented by persons or bodies whose legal title goes back through scores of forgotten antecessors to whatever Norman invaders succeeded the Saxon founders. Patronage is real property, and if appendant to land can still be sold. The patron need not be a Christian, but if a Papist his right lapses to the University of Oxford or Cambridge (which for this purpose have carved up England between them); if an infant,

his trustees act; if mad, the Lord Chancellor, who also must not be Roman Catholic but need not be Christian. In the last resort, the Crown appoints.

The Fenton Morley report, *Partners in Ministry*, now before the dioceses, would sweep all this away and vest appointments in diocesan boards—the bishops already hold a third of all advowsons. Latimer House has reacted vigorously. This manifesto shows that Anglican Evangelicals will fight to maintain patronage in its present hands. They cannot defend it from Scripture; they of all people cannot rely on tradition; their claim is simply that the system works, that New Testament examples are not precepts and that centralized stationing is no more biblical. They would indeed compel unfit patrons to transfer their rights, and would require the patron to consult the bishop, meet representatives of the parish and consider their suggestions. The parish would have a right of refusal; this would hardly have pleased Charles Sineon, who began acquiring livings in 1816, and warned his trustees to be “particularly on their guard against petitions from the parishes to be provided for.”

These suggestions would go far to mend the system. Let Free Churchmen beware! Patronage must be ended, not mended. The appointment of pastors is a solemn duty of the Church, acting through structures which may be varied to serve the present age. The local fellowship has its responsibilities, under some form of wider oversight, but property has no rights here, and within the Church the only Crown rights are those of the Redeemer.

The value of this study lies not in its conclusions but in its review of the evidence in both Testaments, of the development and working of the present system, seen from the inside, and of the practices of other communions. The section on Baptist procedure is fair and accurate, no doubt because Dr. Barrie White was among the *periti* consulted, though more could have been said to clarify the rôle of the Superintendents.

English history has a wonderful continuity, and the roots of patronage are old and twisted; but this tree must be hewn down.

ARNOLD H. J. BAINES.

Anvil. A Baptist Quarterly. Editor, Rev. Rowan Gill, B.A. Coolbinia, Western Australia.

We have been glad to receive the first issue of *Anvil*, a new Baptist quarterly designed especially to serve Australasia and the South Pacific. Its aim is to serve as a forum for serious Baptist discussion “apart from heresy-hunting and bun-fighting on one hand, and academic seclusion on the other.” As evidence of this aim, a major part of the first issue is devoted to a symposium on the opening chapters of Genesis and the concept of evolution. The contributors are plainly of varied viewpoint and *Anvil* is attempting a courageous task of providing a platform for people of differing outlook, and writing for a wide constituency both thoughtful and popular. We wish this new contemporary the success it well deserves.