

Reviews

The English Parish Clergy on the eve of the Reformation by Peter Heath. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London 1969. Pp. xiii, 249. 45s.

This book is an attempt to bring into clearer focus the actual situation, constitutional, financial, educational and disciplinary of the English parish clergy during roughly the half century 1480-1530. The need for this has certainly been great—both the complaints of catholic and protestant reformers, on the one hand, and the assertions of later historians, on the other, have required to be checked against the primary source material, the Church's own records. Within the limits of the records available both in print and in manuscript from a number (but not all) of the English dioceses Dr. Heath has produced a remarkable and convincing picture.

While he has frankly admitted the difficulty of providing adequate statistical samples due to the general paucity of evidence—partly through the loss of records and partly because the records existing do not answer all the questions we should like to put to them—he has used the statistics he has been able to construct with care. Furthermore, the author's own slightly spiced prose and a large number of incidents authenticated by the records provide illustration for his arguments and statistics. On the whole he has taken a realistic view of the late medieval church in England; setting it firmly in its contemporary context and viewing it as an all-too-human institution (as the Church on earth always is) he has given grounds for his argument that, in general, the life of the parish clergy was not normally dramatically scandalous. In addition he has shown that, within certain clearly circumscribed limits, the disciplinary procedures were administered with a fair measure of consistency and faithfulness. Finally he has argued that the tensions between clergy and people on the eve of the English Reformation were heightened by two factors—inflation (which made tithes burdensome to the people and the more needed by the clergy) and printing which diffused and strengthened the forces of anticlerical complaint.

Readers of the *Baptist Quarterly* will, perhaps, particularly value this survey for its general contribution to the history of the English Reformation and for the suggestion in chapter 4 ("Absenteeism") that clerical non-residence had the double significance (p. 68f) of enabling local laymen to become accustomed to dealing with church revenue and to making arrangements for the care of individual parishes. These developments were to become more significant through the early years of the Reformation in England and

then during the rise of Puritanism particularly, of course, in the London parishes. All in all this book will be one of those of which all who are students of the English Reformation will have to take careful account in years to come.

Norfolk in the Civil War. R. W. Ketton-Cremer. London. Faber and Faber. 1969. 382pp. 60s.

A number of impressive studies of various parts of England during the period of the Great Rebellion have appeared in recent years. The present book, which its author, a well-known Norfolk writer, disarmingly confesses has far from exhausted the relevant MS resources known to him has also, as he says, "a strongly biographical slant throughout." While it is not technically so satisfying as are the writings, for example, of Dr. A. M. Everitt, it will undoubtedly be welcomed as a stimulus to further investigation by other students of the period.

The introductory chapters, about a third of the book, briefly survey the state of the gentry and the clergy of the county and then narrate the other events, from the attempts to collect Ship Money down to the out-break of war in 1642. The remainder of the book carries the story down to the execution of Charles I in January 1649. The tone of the book is royalist and episcopalian but not unfairly so: it usefully underlines the fact that even in this "puritan area there were powerful conservative forces.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the author has little interest in the development of Puritans and Independents: he has used the work of Mr. Jewson and John Browne's *History of Congregationalism of Norfolk and Suffolk* (1877) but makes no new contribution of his own. His lack of interest has led to make one or two slips: there is no evidence, as far as I know, that Robert Browne (p. 21) "lived for some years first at Aylsham and then in Norwich"—it was his friend Robert Harrison who lived at Aylsham. Furthermore, anyone who can say that a Bishop did not require (p. 51) "more than a proper measure of conformity" from the puritans in his diocese, and say it without any sign of recognising how many questions are begged by such a statement, does betray a fundamental lack of understanding of their position.

The story of the Puritans and sectaries of Norfolk during the Great Rebellion still requires a modern chronicler, then perhaps such eccentrics as Theophilus Brabourne, who achieves no mention in Mr. Ketton-Cremer's work, and the men who shared in the foundations upon which St. Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich, is built (see Mr. Jewson's article in the October 1969 *Baptist Quarterly*) will secure the full-length study they deserve.

Meanwhile, however, the present volume will serve to awaken interest in its subject and as a survey setting national events in a Norfolk context.

B. R. WHITE

The Court and the Country. Perez Zagorin. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London, 1969. pp.366. 60s.

Here is a book to be commended, not only because of the excellence of its scholarship, but also because it is a pleasure to read. It goes almost without saying that libraries, and readers with a special interest in the period, will want to obtain it. At the same time this is the sort of volume that the general reader who enjoys a well written and worthwhile book might read.

The author, who is Professor of History at the University of Rochester, New York, is an acknowledged authority on English XVIIth century history. His aim in *The Court and the Country* is to "penetrate the specific factors, political, social, and religious, that engendered the revolt against Charles I and determined its character and progress". This he does in 350 pages, tracing the movement of opposition to the Stuart régime from "the formation of the Country opposition in the 1620s to the emergence of the Parliamentary party in 1641—42".

Starting with a careful analysis of the social structure of the nation, Professor Zagorin goes on to provide a detailed examination both of the Country (the opposition to the crown) and of the Court (the crown's adherents). The rôle of the towns in the events of the period is also assessed, and a detailed account is given of the activity and leading personalities of the Long Parliament. A chapter of forty pages devoted to Puritanism, shows among other things, how important a part in the Puritan movement was played by its lay patrons.

Professor Zagorin calls the revolution of 1640—1660 "the highest mountain in the English seventeenth century landscape", and his treatment of the subject certainly befits such a theme. In the course of this study he disposes of a number of misconceptions regarding its nature and origins. He shows that "the revolution occurred and developed into an armed conflict not because of a class struggle, but in consequence of a revolt within the governing classes against the crown". In its initial stages there was no question of its "being at war with the prevailing form of society". Again, religion was not the "precipitating cause" of the civil war, though it served to dispose Englishmen towards one side or the other.

In short, this is an informative, scholarly and readable book, which deserves a wide circulation.

ERNEST F. CLIPSHAM.

In Journeyings Oft. J. B. Middlebrook. London. Baptist Missionary Society 1969. 79pp. 5s. 0d.

Everyone who knew the late H. R. Williamson will be glad to have this brief memoir of him. The story is told with a sensitive insight into the character of this lovable leader, as he grows from the Lancashire lad into the missionary, scholar and Christian

statesman.

He was a great humorist and the book recalls some of his amusing anecdotes, like that of the tailor's shop where he was fitted with a Shantung silk suit on arriving in China, with its sign proclaiming, "Gentlemen suited downstairs. Ladies may have fits upstairs."

Here too, the versatility of H. R. W. comes out as we see him at work in China and willing to have a go at anything and everything: organizing measures against pneumonic plague, serving as Secretary of a national Anti-Narcotics Society, purchasing twelve hundred merino sheep from Australia to improve the quality of local flocks, he took it all in his stride. And this wide range of activity, in addition to his normal missionary work, was evidence of the trust placed in his judgement by so many different people in Chinese public life. As Honorary Adviser to the Governor of Shansi he exerted a wise and beneficial influence over a wide area of public life and all this was, to him, part of his service as a minister of the Gospel.

His return home from China, honoured and loved by that country to which he had given so much, was followed by arduous and distinguished service as Foreign Secretary of the B.M.S. Yet, immersed as he was in heavy responsibilities in war-time Britain, he kept his nostalgic love for China, and this never left him. The "Chinese paintings and calligraphy on the walls of his home," mentioned in a tribute sent to his widow by the B.B.C., spoke of a love for China and a mastery of the Chinese language which were part of his very being.

Not forgotten in this memoir is the wonderful part played by Mrs. Williamson in all that her distinguished husband achieved. His partner from the very beginning of his China days, and herself a very gifted missionary, they enjoyed a life together which was wonderfully rich in happiness and service.

Those who knew Dr. Williamson well, were invited to call him by his Chinese name, "Wei." To be admitted to this elect circle was, for some of us, one of the greatest privileges in our life. To read J. B. Middlebrook's memoir is to discover the reason why.

IRWIN BARNES