

Reviews

Proclamation and Presence. Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies, edited by John J. Durham and J. Roy Porter. London, SCM Press Ltd, 1970. Pp.316. Price £4.

Principal Henton Davies stands in a long line of distinguished Baptist Old Testament scholars, and it is an occasion for legitimate Baptist pride that a volume of essays should be presented to him by his academic colleagues and friends. Whilst no specific event is marked by the publication of this volume, it serves as a mark of gratitude for the very fruitful teaching ministry over many years of an eminent scholar. It contains a short biography of G. Henton Davies and a bibliography of his writings.

Collections of random essays do not always fit together into a well-balanced volume, but in this case the editors are particularly to be congratulated for a very noteworthy book. The contributors are men whose names have become internationally famous, including amongst their number, N. W. Porteous, Geo Widengren, R. de Vaux, J. Weingreen, O. Eissfeldt, W. Eichrodt, J. Bright and A. R. Johnson. They provide a good conspectus of recent work on the Old Testament, particularly bringing out the characteristic methods of recent study, and showing a certain discontent at an over-rigorous application of any one particular method. N. W. Porteous, in particular, in examining the limits of Old Testament interpretation, rejects every interpretative straight-jacket whether provided by the semantic linguist, the form-critic or the pure historian, although remaining anxious to learn from all three.

Some essays are devoted to particular themes, as Père de Vaux's thorough investigation of the significance of the revelation of the divine name YHWH in Exodus 3. Others provide broad surveys of recent work, such as Geo Widengren's essay "What Do We Know About Moses?" in which he offers a useful and positive study of the new quest of the historical Moses.

Two particularly interesting essays are devoted to the study of Jeremiah. John Bright writes in Jeremiah's complaints in which he opposes some of the more radical form-critical approaches to the "personal confessions" of Jeremiah, and argues that we do possess here a genuine record of the Prophet's own inner conflicts. J. Muilenburg writes on Baruch the scribe, arguing that, as a professional scribe, we can see in Baruch's biographical material about Jeremiah the typical prose style of the contemporary scribal circle. Thus he concludes that the Deuteronomic style is itself derivable

from the current contemporary scribal mode of composition, and does not therefore necessarily reflect a markedly secondary editorial activity in the book of Jeremiah.

The singling out of these essays is not intended to imply that the other essays are less interesting, but simply reflects the reviewer's own predilections. This is a valuable volume, both in rendering honour to one to whom honour is due, and in surveying the "state of the art" in contemporary Old Testament scholarship.

R. E. CLEMENTS.

The New Testament and the Roman State, D. R. Griffiths (Pant-yfedwen Trust Lectures), John Penry Press. Price 12s. 6d.

This—D. R. Griffiths' first book, although he has written various articles, including a contribution to *Christian Baptism*—represents an expansion of the 1964 Pant-yfedwen Trust Lecture delivered at Swansea. A two-part introductory chapter on the NT background is followed by two chapters on the Gospels: first, the political implications of Jesus' ministry in general, then the tribute money saying (Mk. 12) and the Trial of Jesus. I would assume that Jesus' ministry, because it raised the whole question of Israel's vocation—what it meant to be the people of God—was inevitably related to the contemporary political scene. While Mr. Griffiths recognises this (p.46), it is not made as central as the present reviewer would like. It is a pity that he did not discuss Brandon's view of the Tribute saying that it is a Zealot saying. Otherwise his criticisms of the view that Jesus was Zealot-inclined are helpful, though not exhaustive.

Further chapters explore the relations of Christianity and the Roman state in Acts; the Pauline and Pastoral epistles; in 1 Peter and Revelation. The Acts chapter is well done, though some reference to the theme of Jesus' innocence in Lukes trial scene (briefly attended-to in a sentence in the previous chapter on the Trial) might have usefully introduced this. The main issues on such "thorny" passages as 2 Thess. 2, Rom. 13, 1-7 and 1 Peter 4, 12-16 are given, though inevitably such a complex book as Revelation only receives sketchy treatment.

A brief conclusion is given, including a wise reminder of the differences between the NT era and our own in the realm of political possibilities open to the average person.

No revelant passage appears to have been overlooked. The presentation is clear, lucid and concise. In preparing for publication, the author has kept in mind "as wide a circle of readers as possible". Judged from this standpoint, he succeeds, within a small compass, in giving the general reader a clear summary of the various issues involved in his theme. Yet, equally, this aim curtails the value of the book from an academic standpoint since, as Mr. Griffiths acknowledges, he has "to deal very briefly with certain themes which would call for more extended treatment in a larger

work". It is too brief for a theology degree student. When we badly need a treatment of the Trial of Jesus which will in some measure "reply" to the volumes by Winter and Brandon, it is to be hoped that Mr. Griffiths will go on to a more detailed work of which he is obviously capable.

J. E. MORGAN-WYNNE.

The influence of prophecy in the later middle ages: a study in Joachimism, by Marjorie Reeves. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1969. Pp.xiv, 574. Price £5.

This book will be found to be of real value and of absorbing interest not only by the Medievalist but also by students both of the Reformation and of English Puritanism. Nevertheless it is concerned with a very specialised subject and most readers would need first to familiarise themselves with the background to Joachimism provided by such books as Professor Leff's *Heresy in the later Middle Ages* and Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (2nd edition 1970).

Joachim of Fiore (c.1135-1202) was noted during his lifetime as an expositor of Scripture and, especially, of the Apocalypse. But it was not until after his death that his interpretation of the patterns of history and of the whole historical process began to exert a significant influence. In the thirteenth century his views attained sufficient importance (or notoriety) to cause men not only to preserve his writings and to spread abroad his interpretations but also to produce and to attribute to him developments of his teaching which derived from later disciples. Furthermore, while Joachim himself had probably remained loyal to the historical institution of the Papacy many of his disciples down the years were to adopt a very much more hostile attitude towards it. Meanwhile, marginal notes in the manuscripts both of his own writings and, more especially, of pseudo-Joachimist works bear witness to the continuing excitement with which they were read during the centuries after his death.

Miss Reeves' primary object has been to trace the fascinating story of the development, the application and the re-application in the different generations of Joachim's key categories. These ideas helped not only to stimulate a ground swell of apocalyptic hope and longing for reform in the medieval Church but may even have helped to crystallise the aims of the Emperor Charles V during the first generation of the Reformation. At the same time it is one of the ironies of the history of ideas that Joachimism, at several removes from its original source, influenced the thinking both of such radicals as Thomas Muntzer on one side of the Reformation story and of some early Jesuits on the other.

It is to be hoped that this work will provide the foundation for a further study—of the part played by Joachimist thought patterns in England 1640-1660—a field into which Miss Reeves has not

entered since it falls beyond her period.

B. R. WHITE.

Now is the Time: Changing Church Structures, by Paul R. Clifford, 1970. Collins, 35s.

Urgency characterises the contents as well as the title of this provocative book. Its author, formerly minister of the West Ham Central Mission and now president of the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, believes that it is high time for talk to be translated into action which will start to change the structures of the Church *now*. He is convinced that unless this happens soon the Church is doomed to total irrelevance within a decade.

Anyone likely to be impatient with the sequence of the argument is advised by the author to turn to the last chapter first. It deals with the *real* crisis which is not the shape of the Church but its Faith. Belief is prior to structures and patterns. It is obviously little use improving the efficiency of the conveyor belt if there is nothing to convey.

Mr. Clifford accepts the concept of truth as relative and provisional. Any human expression of it must, therefore, be inadequate (a concept which he believes should govern our attitude to the Bible as well as to the historic creeds). Nevertheless he affirms "the givenness of the Gospel", and suggests that there are four signposts to the understanding of it: belief in God the transcendent Creator; recognition of the predicament of man as lost without the grace of God; acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Saviour; acceptance of the hope of the fulfilment of God's purpose for the whole created universe.

If the Church is to communicate this Gospel in the present age it must undergo a fundamental change of outlook governed by the fact of the Incarnation. This involves a three-fold identification: with all seekers after truth, with ordinary people in their moral perplexity and in the depths of their emotional life; and that means humility, understanding and compassion.

Such a change of outlook calls for practical expression especially in ecumenical involvement. Mr. Clifford is convinced that denominational divisions are obsolete. The ramifications of ecclesiastical organisation reveal a sinful waste of man-power and money. He pleads for immediate rationalisation so that the resources of the Church can be "marshalled for global mission".

The rationalisation has to be effected at the grass roots, in local ministry and mission. Ecumenical experiments such as those at Desborough, Corby and Thamesmead point the way. But the writer is displeased with the limitation of Baptist participation in the last mentioned project. He has some "harsh words" (self-confessed) to say about this "tragic" situation. It is a criticism which fails to take account of the local situation or the severity of the theological tensions; and it is not helped by an attempted justifica-

tion of the Roman Catholic Church which has also taken independent action regarding denominational buildings. Having made a plea for the pattern of ministry and mission to be worked out at the local level the author can hardly complain if it turns out differently from the structure he himself favours.

The larger regional, national and international structures of the Church also require to be much more flexible so as to encourage ecumenical renewal. He suggests, in the long term, the establishment of regional centres for every main population zone to provide inspiration and leadership for the whole church within its orbit, manned by a carefully selected team and able to provide a ministry to the whole area which no individual congregation or localised experiment could possibly offer.

Such recommendations raise questions about the ministry and its training. The omniscient clergyman is another anachronism. Specialisation must come into its own. This will make the development of team ministries inevitable. "One priest to a parish and one minister to a congregation" is a concept which is on the way out so there will need to be a revolutionary change in ministerial training. This will require different kinds of colleges to train students for different kinds of ministry. Training should be ecumenical and geared to the development of initiative and responsibility rather than to the achievement of academic qualifications, though the latter are not to be minimised.

This book raises issues which demand to be considered—the continuance of denominational structures, for example. It poses questions about the Church and the Gospel which call for an answer. Local churches and Associations will find plenty of material here for discussion. They will also find direction to lines of action, mostly ecumenical. Mr. Clifford pins his faith to ecumenical involvement and does not seem to make sufficient allowance for the widespread suspicion of organic union or for the psychological inability of not a few who find it impossible to plunge into the ecumenical stream. But if *Now is the Time* helps to make clear the need for changing structures, and if it produces a genuine willingness to change, it will have rendered a useful service.

J. J. BROWN.