

# Reviews

*Erasmus of Christendom*, Roland H. Bainton. Collins. £2 10s. 399 pages.

We are indebted to Professor Bainton for many studies of the Reformation period. In Desiderius Erasmus he has found a congenial spirit, and his sympathy with him is evident throughout this warm and informative book. Erasmus could not, by the very nature of his genius, leave behind a church or sect to perpetuate his memory and produce hagiography. In this he is perhaps fortunate because he has found in Professor Bainton a biographer who combines an account of his life and indeed of his times, with an illuminating interpretation of his writings at each period.

Erasmus sought to hold together the best in the teachings of the Church in which he grew up and the best of the Renaissance humanist tradition. He was concerned with education, with good manners, as well as with the abuses of the Church and with theology. Educated by Brethren of the Common Life at Deventer, he entered the Augustinian order not, like Luther, to save his soul, but because there was a good library at Steyn. He did not stay in the cloister for long. For the rest of his life he was a wanderer, now in the service of a bishop, now examining a library, sometimes in England making friends with Thomas More and his family, sometimes in Italy conversing with cardinals, often in his native Holland. He considered himself a citizen of Europe, and had little time for the rising nationalist feeling that was so prevalent.

Bainton gives copious extracts from Erasmus' writings, not only from the well-known works such as the *Praise of Folly*, but also from the early treatises, the letters, and occasional pieces. He gives due place and informed criticism to the editions of the New Testament which placed so many later scholars in Erasmus' debt.

It is Erasmus' humanism that stands out. He usually opposed superstition, oppression, war, ignorance. He was neither for nor against Luther, and indeed in his correspondence with the Reformer and his allies he appears curiously ambivalent, as if two worlds were meeting and not quite understanding each other. I would die, possibly, for the cause of the gospel, but not for the paradoxes of Luther, he says in effect.

The man who attempts to take middle ground ends up lonely, and so it was with Erasmus. His gift of satire did not help him to be loved. He was a man of peace and culture in an age that

seemed more and more warlike and barbarous. Bainton has made this man live in the context of his time. Only one error or misprint caught the attention. On page 308 James VI should be James V. But that is a tiny blemish in an admirable book.

DEREK MURRAY.

*The Oxford Martyrs*, by D. M. Loades. London. Batsford. 1970. Pp. 296.

In this book Dr. D. M. Loades, already known for his *Two Tudor Conspiracies*, provides a fresh and vigorous exposition of ideological conflict in the English Reformation which came to a head in the reign of Queen Mary. With engaging candour he admits he has no new evidence to contribute and the value of his work lies in his treatment of familiar material from a new viewpoint.

About one third of the *Oxford Martyrs* is taken up with setting the scene of the English Reformation between Henry VIII's break with Rome and the accession of his daughter. Already the central dilemma of the Protestants was clearly exposed by Catholic controversialists: private interpretation of Scripture could all too soon destroy all authority or consistency in Christian teaching and practice. Hence, a choice must be made between authority and order and the disorder which would inevitably follow from the unrestrained application of private judgment to the faith. Nor did the noble gangsters who seized power under the boy King Edward VI enhance the attractiveness of the Protestant choice.

Then Dr. Loades shows us the familiar picture of Mary, deluded by the popularity of her accession to the throne into the belief that her countrymen found her religion equally popular, making a succession of blunders outstanding among which was her tragic marriage with Philip II of Spain. He underlines the mistake made by Mary and her counsellors in underestimating the need for enthusiastic printed propaganda and a passionate campaign by preachers to win the support of the apathetic majority of her people. The development of Protestant polemic is shown and the growing conviction, encouraged by the government's own policy, that patriotism and the reformation went together. The last section of the book, which here seems to lean rather heavily upon the work of William Haller and William Lamont, describes the impact and implications for later English history of Fox's *Book of Martyrs*.

One criticism may, perhaps, be justly made. To speak, without qualifications, of 'Anglicans' in 1553 (p.100) may involve a larger error than a small anachronism for it ministers to the widespread assumption that most reasonable Edwardian and Marian Protestants looked forward to something like the Eliza-

bethan episcopal establishment to be defended by Richard Hooker a generation later. The ecclesiological ideals of these men need much more careful assessment than they have so far had and yet prove to have been more radical, more often, than is usually thought.

Nevertheless this book would provide an attractive introduction to the study of the English Reformation.

B. R. WHITE.

C. H. Spurgeon : *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. VIII (1862) reprint 1969, pp 720, £1.25. *The Saint and His Saviour*, reprint 1970, pp 334, 50p. *The Golden Alphabet*, A Devotional Commentary on Psalm 119 reprint 1969, 95p.

All of these volumes are published by Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, Texas, U.S.A. Their agent in the U.K. is the Rev. Eric Hayden, The Manse, Etnam Street, Leominster, Herefordshire. Pilgrim Publications have recently undertaken the mammoth task of republishing the 56 volumes of Spurgeon's sermons, as well as other titles of his. Their method of republication is to photo-litho the original volumes.

*The Saint and His Saviour*, originally published in 1857, is Spurgeon's earliest work, apart from his sermons. It is a choice volume which demonstrates how much Spurgeon was indebted to the practical theology of the Puritans. For anyone interested in investigating the antecedents of Spurgeon's theology it is required reading.

*The Golden Alphabet* which appeared after *The Treasury of David*, Spurgeon's well-known exposition of the Psalms, is a popular commentary which yields nuggets on almost every page.

Of Spurgeon, the preacher, we say 'Take and read'. The best way to discover the real Spurgeon is to read his sermons. The range of his preaching is remarkable. His social concern comes out strongly in sermons 432 and 479. Spurgeon lived his own words. 'The man who will do good must throw himself into his words; and put his whole being into intense communion with the truth which he utters.' (p.629).

D. P. KINGDON.

*The Concept of the Believers' Church*. Ed. James Lee Garrett, Jr.. Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania. 1970. Unpriced.

The phrase "The Believers' Church' is an American alternative for one frequently used in Baptist circles in this country, "the Gathered Church". This book, a substantial paperback,

reproduces addresses given at a conference of leaders of branches of the Believers' Church in the U.S.A., held at Louisville in 1967. The participants acknowledged the following as parts of the spiritual heritage which they shared: the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Word, church membership regenerated by the Spirit, and the covenant of believers. In view of this, the length and spread of the list of participating churches will be surprising to many in this country. It includes Assemblies of God, Baptists, Brethren in Christ, Churches of Christ, the Church of God, The Disciples of Christ, Mennonites, Friends, the Presbyterian Church of Japan, and the United Methodist Church. One learns that the majority of the Protestants in the U.S.A. are members of a believers' churches.

The Conference dealt with its theme under four headings: *A Believing People*, *A People in Community*, *A People under the Word*, and *A People in the World*. Each aspect was considered historically, theologically, and in the light of its contemporary relevance. Among the Baptist contributors were Drs. William R. Estep, Dale Moody, and Kenneth Scott Latourette. The addresses vary in length, depth and in the degree of their scholarly detachment, but some are first-class contributions.

Dr. Estep surveys the history of some of the leading churches of the Believers' type, including the Moravians, the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and the Disciples of Christ. He emphasizes that it is to the Anabaptists, and not to the less radical Reformers, that we owe the concept of the Believers' Church and its earliest implementation.

It is somewhat surprising to note the reluctance of the contributors of theological papers to trace the roots of the Believers' Church back to the New Testament. We may be thankful that, as Franklin H. Littell writes, the developments in theological and historical science have put an end to wrangling among the churches as to priority, but it is still true, surely, that the seed of the Believers' Church, as of other forms of the Christian Church, can be found in the New Testament teaching. Abraham J. Malherbe (Church of Christ) has searching questions to ask about the relation between the Church and the written Word of God. Do not the believers' churches, in their emphasis upon the witness of the New Testament, minimize the dependence of its documents upon the Church, both in the matter of their contents and of the Canon? How does our claim that New Testament is normative for our polity look in the light of the wide diversity which recent biblical theology has found in its teaching? These are matters which still await our attention.

In the sections dealing with "Contemporary Relevance" attention is given to the distinctive contribution which the Believers' Church has to make to the witness of the World Church. Dr.

Pope A. Duncan considers that this might stem from the fact that we are a symbol of the freedom of the Spirit, reminding ourselves and others "that God's winds blow where they will". Dr. John Howard Yoder (Mennonite), in one of the best of the addresses, argues that discipleship as conceived by the Believers' Church promises to resolve the tension at present existing in almost all branches of the Church — that between salvation conceived as individual and as social. Men and women enter the fellowship of believers' churches as a result of their response to the prior call of God, and at once they find themselves members of communities covenanted to serve and witness. The Church was created by God, not to work merely for the salvation of men as individuals, nor to "make history come out right", but to exist as such a covenant community. This approach to the problem will not satisfy everyone, but it contains insight of great value.

The book would have been enriched by some notice of the life and work of believers' churches in other parts of the world, such as South America, Europe, and the African continent. We should also have welcomed comment on the possibility and problems of co-operation between churches of the Believers' type and other churches, not to mention of organic union between them. P.A. Duncan reminds us that believers' churches have not been as active as they should have been in the ecumenical movement, whilst G. H. Williams of the Harvard Divinity School affirms that if the Believers' Church has something to contribute to other Christians, it also has something to learn from them about "the corporate nature of the church and the manifold richness of Christ revealed in the totality of its ongoing life".

DONALD MONKCOM.

*Baptism in the Holy Spirit.* James G. D. Dunn. London  
SMC Press 1970 248pp £2.50 (50s)

The sub-title illustrates this book's strength and weakness: "A re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism Today". The re-examination of familiar ground makes little advance, but the emphasis upon the living experience of the Spirit is wholly welcome. The interminable baptismal debate so often parries words, inherited patterns, theological concepts, in which the experience of the believer is ignored: a contribution which at any rate professes concern with spiritual realities must have value. Technical competence, range of authorities, thoroughness of argumentation go without saying in a doctoral thesis superintended by C. F. D. Moule.

For all that, one lesson of the decade's debate is here heavily

underlined: controversy is no pathway to truth. To seek in Luke, John, Paul, simply for something "to knock the Pentecostalist's case on the head", and to do so persistently (excepting only where the target changes temporarily to the sacramentalists) makes for tiresome reading, unconvincing conclusions, and even where the case being argued was once congenial to the reader, a final disappointment. Men new to the discussion will here learn much; all will learn something; few, I imagine, whether Pentecostalists or not, will be persuaded — there are so many points at which the controversial approach produces curiosities of exegesis.

The baptism of Jesus is made so complicated as to mean little for the continuing church; it suggests that Christian baptism was a dispensational error. John's Gospel supports Pentecostalism, but then the apostle's experience is no pattern for ours. Luke's presentation of conversion-initiation is not so much complicated as incoherent, while Paul, discussed piecemeal, seems to offer not a consistent doctrine but a series of puzzling remarks. The water in Ephesians 5 is not baptism, but a bridal bath accompanied by — preaching!

With the main positive thesis, that possession of the Spirit distinguishes the Christian man, few who read a book like this will disagree. With the main negative thesis, that water-baptism has not the central role in conversion-initiation, even fewer would quarrel — not paedobaptists, and certainly not Baptists. It scarcely needs demonstrating that the only thing which water-baptism automatically conveys is wetness. Three main disappointments recur to mind.

Faith is nowhere defined, and the assumed subjective meaning fails to do justice to New Testament statements. The assumption that baptism anywhere in the New Testament means "water baptism pure and simple, extending only to the cleansing of the body" vitiates much argument, likewise. Did Jesus really take a bath in Jordan? Dr. Dunn seems unable to conceive a faith-sacrament, a living encounter with God within a disciplined pattern of behaviour involving Christ, the initiate, and the church, shaped by the saving facts of the gospel. Thirdly, if Pentecostalists and sacramentalists are so wrong, and the accepted order of the churches so ineffective in bringing men the Spirit, what has Dr. Dunn to offer, apart from a second book? For that promised sequel, the present volume certainly whets our appetite.

R. E. O. WHITE

*An order of Public Worship.* Oxford University Press. 1970. 50 pages, 30p (6/-)

Under the chairmanship of the Rev. J. M. Todd, the fifteen members of the worship committee of the Congregational Church in England and Wales have produced this booklet. It

is the order of public worship for Sunday — the service of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The material is arranged in a single order but at each point of the service a number of prayers are provided from which a choice can be made. There are, for example, six prayers of intercession and six eucharistic prayers. While this enhances the value of the booklet as a source of prayer material for ministers, it makes it unsuitable for use by the congregation. The declared aim of the compilers 'to encourage the fullest possible congregational participation' could be achieved more fully if the material were set out as six successive and complete services. Instead, they express the forlorn hope that this deficiency will be overcome by private printing of some of the prayers by local churches.

It is notoriously difficult to know what kind of language to use to-day in the preparation of material for worship. In the last decade the movement away from traditional to contemporary language has been gathering momentum. The committee, while welcoming the experiments being made to express praise and prayer in contemporary words, has nevertheless come down heavily on the side of the traditional — including the *thee's* and the *thou's*. This is the only respect in which the booklet is disappointing. Theologically and devotionally the content of the prayers is altogether excellent. The recital of the mighty deeds of God, including his work in creation, the awareness that the celebration of the pascal mystery includes the resurrection and the priestly ministry of Christ in glory, the acknowledgment of the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit and the eschatological emphasis are all here. Only at one point are these eucharistic prayers likely to give rise to controversy. The sentence in the new Anglican 'Draft order for Holy Communion' which caused such a furore at the Church Assembly — 'we offer unto thee this bread and this cup' — variously worded, is found in substance in three of the eucharistic prayers. The traditional order of Reformed worship is retained. There are some notes on the different parts of the service, and on the use of hymns and tunes. The two-year lectionary prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group is appended.

This booklet will undoubtedly enrich, and that greatly, the monologue prayers of many a Free Church minister. Its value would be greatly enhanced, when ministers and churches have commented on it, if it could be produced in a form in which it could be used by the whole congregation.

STEPHEN F. WINWARD

Ecumenism is one of the subjects on which Baptists differ most widely, sometimes bitterly. Those who are looking for a fair treatment of the subject, together with a lot of information, had better start here.

Dr. Payne begins with a quotation from Canon David Edwards: "The future of Christianity as a body and therefore as a force, in the modern world, seems to depend on the transforming influence which is being exerted on the churches by the World Council of Churches and by the Second Vatican Council." His thesis—the substance of the Dr. Williams's Lecture for 1970—is that "there is much more to be said for the judgement of David Edwards than for that of the critics."

But the author does not ignore his critics, whether they be Malcolm Muggeridge, who said of the World Council of Churches—"if ever in human history there was a non-event, this was it," or the many in the Baptist communion whose condemnation would be even more scathing.

Dr. Payne traces the growth of the W.C.C. and the points at which Baptists in various parts of the world have either identified themselves with it or felt compelled to withdraw from it. He passes on to deal with the activities of the various Divisions of the W.C.C., such as the Churches' Commission on International Affairs and the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service. Each is treated with a wealth of compressed information and an honest assessment of its strength and weakness.

Then comes an attempt to see some of the future issues, such as a further sharing in the work of the W.C.C. by the Roman Church, and that of participation in the policies of the Council. On the latter point, there is the amusing yet disturbing quotation from a Black African woman delegate to Uppsala: "The world's population is mostly young, mostly coloured, half women, mostly not clergy. The Assembly make-up was mostly old, mostly white, only nine per cent women and mostly clerical." Dr. Payne adds that the speaker is now a member of the Central Committee!

This is an honest examination of one of the outstanding phenomena of contemporary Christianity. Dr. Payne knows its failings better than most for he has seen them from the inside. Yet despite that, he believes that David Edwards is nearer the truth than Malcolm Muggeridge.

IRWIN BARNES.