

Reviews

Erasmus of Christendom. Roland H. Bainton. 80 p. *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought.* Gerard Ebeling. 60 p. Fontana Library of Theology & Philosophy. Collins.

Those who have not read Professor Bainton's volume on the great humanist scholar, Erasmus, should not miss this paper-back edition. It has the illustrations and drawings with which the American historian so effectively adorns his works, and is worthy to stand beside the author's classic study of Luther. Published as recently as 1969, it shows a mastery of the large number of books and monographs on Erasmus; it is intimate and very readable; and it has relevance to many modern issues, both theological and practical. Erasmus "was resolved to abstain from violence alike of word and deed, but was not sure that significant reform could be achieved *sine tumultu*".

Bainton's brief "Epilogue", in which the contributions to subsequent developments of Erasmus and Luther are compared and contrasted, provides a useful bridge to Professor Ebeling's important lectures, published in German in 1964. Professor Rupp has described them as worth their weight in gold. Luther found Erasmus too cold and sceptical. Erasmus thought Luther wrong in certain of his notions and far too dogmatic, though he refused to denounce the younger man as a "monster from hell", as some wished. Could Professors Bainton and Ebeling have introduced them to one another, much heart-ache and trouble might have been avoided.

Popular Belief and Practice. Edited by G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker. Studies in Church History, Vol. 8. Cambridge University Press, £6.40.

This volume contains papers read at the 9th and 10th meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society. The series in which it appears gains in value, though the increasing price must restrict its circulation almost exclusively to libraries. This makes it the more important to note what is to be found here.

There are twenty-six papers dealing with popular religion from Roman times until 1911, when Dr. F. B. Meyer initiated a successful campaign to stop a fight in London between Jack Johnson, an American negro, and Bombardier Wells. This last contribution has special interest for Baptists. It is by Stuart Mews, Lecturer in Sociology of Religion in Lancaster. A number of other papers merit attention by our denominational historians. Dr. Basil Hall, of Manchester, writes on the Welsh Revival of 1904. Canon Michael Hennell discusses "Evangelicalism and Worldliness, 1770-1870". Claire Cross, a Senior Lecturer in York, finds a good deal of material in the Broadmead Records for her consideration of the part played by women in the founding of some Civil War churches, while Margaret Spufford, of

Cambridge, writes on the social status of some 17th century Dissenters in rural Cambs.

Attention should also be called to Dr. Marjorie Reeves's paper on "Some Popular Prophecies from the 14th to the 17th centuries", that by Professor Gordon Rupp on early Protestant spirituality, that by Professor Yule, of Melbourne, on the Long Parliament, and two papers on Methodism, one by Dr. Walsh, of Oxford, on "Methodism and the mob" and the other by the president of the E.H.S., Professor W. R. Ward, of Durham.

To single out ten papers is hardly fair, except in a specialist journal. Whatever their special field of interest, readers will find here rich and varied food for thought. In view of current controversies, there is timeliness in the paper by Professor W. H. C. Frend, of Glasgow, on the Christological controversy of the 5th century, with its conclusion that "Cyrilline theology as interpreted by the opponents of Chalcedon touched the sources of popular theology in the east" — hence the persistent opposition to the Chalcedonian definition with its clear assertion of the complete manhood of Jesus.

The Radical Brethren. Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558, by Irvin Buckwalter Horst. Nieuwkoop. B. De Graaf. 211 pp. Hfl. 65,-.

Within twelve months of Dr. B. R. White's book on the English Separatist tradition from the Marian martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers comes this volume on Anabaptism in England from the pen of Professor Irvin Horst, a Mennonite scholar from the University of Amsterdam. The publication of the two volumes so close together will enhance the value of each, by pointing to the importance of the historical issues involved and the need for yet further study of the 16th century radicals.

Professor Horst has been at work in this field for some time. He contributed an article to the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* in 1956 and ten years later circulated a lithographed copy of the thesis which secured him a doctorate. The book before us revises and expands his earlier work. Dr. Horst has examined with great care all the references, direct and indirect, to Anabaptism in England, drawing on the extensive materials now available in German and Dutch, as well as those published by Mennonite historians in America. The result is a work which will be eagerly studied by Reformation scholars to whatever denomination or party they belong.

That there were Anabaptist refugees in England in the middle of the 16th century has long been known. Several suffered death as heretics and their views were condemned in the Thirty-Nine Articles as well as in a number of pamphlets. But it has long been a moot point whether there was really a sizeable and organised movement and whether, if there was, it had spread to any extent among the native population. Was there any direct connection between the Anabaptists of the continent and the Separatist movement in general, and the

Baptists of the 17th century in particular? In 1909 the late Dr. Whitley described the General Baptists as "an English outgrowth of the Continental Anabaptists acting upon the Lollards". Later he was at pains to deny any connection. Little detailed research has been given to the subject since the work of Champlin Burrage (1912), the review of the evidence by Duncan Heriot (1935) and the study which led to my own Dr. Williams's Lecture in 1949.

Dr. White declared that "evidence of anything approaching direct influence from Anabaptism upon the English Separatists before John Smyth arrived in Amsterdam appears to be completely lacking" (*op. cit.*, p. 162). It will be interesting to learn whether Dr. Horst's book leads him to modify this very categorical statement.

Anabaptism in England was, in Dr. Horst's view, "a current of lay nonconformity", which became "the leading form of sectarianism during the early Reformation period" (p. 177). It was established in some strength about 1535 when, at the time of the Münster debacle, there was a considerable influx of refugees from the Low Countries into East Anglia and Kent. It came to include both foreign and native adherents. In 1550 Joan Bocher claimed a thousand supporters in London. There were continuing links with Dutch-Flemish Anabaptists and some also with those of Hesse. Proscribed during the reign of Henry VIII, Anabaptist views spread under Edward VI and survived in spite of the suffering of all Protestants under Mary. But "it was not separatist and did not institute rebaptism of believers", says Dr. Horst (p. 178). It was "radical protest within the established church". Its adherents shared the doctrinal views of Melchior Hofmann regarding the incarnation, believed in free will, maintained high ethical standards and because of the English situation were "a nonseparating type of anabaptism". There is evidence of contacts with David Joris.

Among the many matters of special interest in Dr. Horst's book is his suggestion that Calvin's *Briève Instruction* (1544) may have been composed as a reply to an English edition (1532) of the *Schleitheim Articles* (1527). He thinks that Robert Cooche may have been influenced by Bernardino Ochino, who came to England in 1547, a matter on which Dr. Glen Garfield Williams may one day throw more light. To Henry Hart, a leader of the Separatists in Kent, whom Knappen described as "half-way Anabaptists", Dr. Horst devotes fourteen pages. He admits that our knowledge of the man and his work is slight, but he makes a good case for accepting Strype's description of him as an Anabaptist and a Pelagian. The suggestion that Hart may have been the Englishman called "Henry", who financed the meeting of Anabaptist leaders in Bocholt in 1536 is attractive, but without any confirmatory evidence. The linking of the Anabaptism of Mary's reign with the Family of Love is also speculation.

Dr. Horst candidly admits the gaps in our knowledge. He indicates localities such as Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Lincolnshire, where further research may yet provide more information. It is to be hoped that he will himself continue his studies through the reign of

Elizabeth into the 17th century. His extensive bibliography will be a valuable stimulus to further investigation.

Whether or not all that it contains wins acceptance, this is a book which Baptists everywhere should welcome with much gratitude.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

Some Early Nonconformist Church Books (ed.) H. G. Tibbutt. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol. 51, 1972, 88 pages. No price stated.

Eric Meadows' picture of Keysoe Brook End Baptist Church forms the delightful pictorial introduction to those transcripts from the various Church Books of eight Bedfordshire nonconformist churches. All the material transcribed relates to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The records are very helpful in establishing the antecedents of existing causes. For example, one of the peculiarities of the Stevington Church was its holding of Church Meetings in various places which were geographically several miles apart. As early as 1680 this Church was sending preachers to Rushden, Horton, Hackleton, and Northampton; and by 1687 there were meetings for Stevington members being held in and around Northampton. This was all nine years before the College Street church was formed in Northampton. In Northampton, in 1689, a church meeting was held in "John Sharpe's house"; and in the same year "Austin Tayler's house in Hardingstone, Cotton End, (near) Northampton" provided another venue. In Blisworth similar meetings took place, though the present Baptist cause there only dates from 1825. It is this kind of information which makes this book an invaluable resource not only for Bedfordshire, but also Northamptonshire Baptist history.

One of the interesting items recorded concerns "the forme of marriage" and "the certificate to witness marriage" which occur in the Carlton Church Book transcript. The two simple forms are in contrast with the lengthy discussion of marriage contracts which are recorded in *The Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1677-1686*, pp. 89-91, published as Volume 26 of the Bristol Record Society, 1971. Interestingly, the *Broadmead Records: 1640-1687*, ed. E. B. Underhill, does not record marriage contracts at all, the majority of members having secured certificates for marriage from their local parish minister. The extracts here given also throw light on other matters such as baptism and church discipline.

The eight churches whose records are published, are as follows. The Kensworth church, which is of interest because from its membership originated the Baptist churches now meeting at Park Street, Luton, and Dagnall Street, St. Albans. Keysoe Brook End, originally an Independent cause, became Baptist in the late eighteenth century. Stevington very soon changed from an Independent to a Baptist position. Carlton seceded from Stevington in 1689, in order to maintain the Independent witness, but eventually it became Baptist, and

then Strict Baptist in the late nineteenth century. The extracts from the Rothwell, Northants, and the Kimbolton Books are brief and only relate to the members of these two Independent causes who eventually joined other Bedfordshire churches. The Bedford-Southill church, formed by a former Rothwell member, later drew many members from several towns and villages on the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire border. Originally Independent, the cause was first Baptist, then Strict Baptist. The Hail Weston-St. Neots church was first located on the Hertfordshire border, then moved after some years to St. Neots, and was probably an Independent congregation.

The subject, name and place indices to the transcripts, and the predominantly geographical notes appended to each abstract, make it very easy for these wider early nonconformist origins to be traced. Once again we are indebted to H. G. Tibbutt for a splendid piece of work.

Sion Baptist Church, Cloughfield: 300th Anniversary Handbook.

F. J. Baldwin. 16 pages. Price 20p.

A Short History of Maldon Baptist Church, Essex. Margaret P. Jones

(1972). 54 pages. Price 30p.

Century of Witness: Altrincham Baptist Church. C. M. Walker (1972). 24 pages.

100 Years and More: Baptists in Newcastle-under-Lyme. John Briggs (1972). 32 pages. Price 20p.

These four short histories of local Baptist Churches present an interesting picture of Baptist work in the past 100 years. The Sion Cloughfold Handbook is a brief history of the Church written by F. J. Baldwin with details of the celebration thanksgiving week held in October, 1972. Reading the story recalls the faithful witness of ordinary working folk in the Rossendale Valley over 300 years. A substantial history has also been published by the Church and this gives the detail which underlies the Handbook.

The other three histories present interesting similarities showing that in the past 100 years, whether in Essex, the Potteries or Cheshire, local churches have been predominantly concerned with matters of finance and fabric; that they have found it difficult to resolve personal relationships between members and ministers; and that each building began in that 19th century equivalent of the "all-purpose building"—an iron church or "tin tabernacle".

The Maldon history is told in terms of the ministers. In so doing it highlights the lack of indigenous leadership which seems to have dogged the Church until fairly recent times; and reveals the weakness of H.W.F. policy which used to demand a new call to the minister every five years.

The Altrincham story tells of the difficult early days, the years of expansion, and the periods before and after World War II. In so doing it relates the life of the Church to the local and national

situation effectively. Despite a very strange beginning the church has gone on to grow in spiritual maturity.

The history of Baptists in Newcastle-under-Lyme is the best example of what can be done within a short space to tell local Baptist Church history effectively. The outside and inside covers carry pictures of the Church buildings, past and present, and throughout the text there are graphs, illustrations and further pictures of the life and work of the Church. The history itself is traced back to its 17th century origins and its revival in the 19th century. The concluding chapter presents a delightful picture of what the past has meant and what the future holds for the church. Anyone wishing to write a local history of their Church would do well to consult this one before they set about their own particular task, to see just what *can* be accomplished within 32 pages for only 20p each copy.

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