

<sup>93</sup> G. W. Byrt, *John Clifford: a fighting Free Churchman*, London, 1947, p. 126.

<sup>94</sup> George White, "The Nonconformist Conscience in its Relation to our National Life", *Baptist Handbook*, 1904, pp. 106f.

D. W. BEBBINGTON

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## Reviews

*The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah.* J. D. W. Watts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975. x, 190pp. £3.90.

This commentary, written by a Baptist scholar who is currently Professor of Old Testament at Serampore College, India, continues the format of earlier volumes in the series. The New English Bible text is given in full, with footnotes, and is divided into sections with the commentary accompanying the relevant passage. A brief outline of the history of prophecy and the political history of Judah from the fifth to the seventh centuries B.C. is also included in an introduction.

The main emphasis of the book concerns the relationship of the prophecies and the cult. With the possible exception of Jonah, the prophecies are treated as prophetic liturgies designed for use in public worship. Joel, Obadiah, and Zephaniah were composed for the "day of the Lord", regarded as the climax of the royal Zion festival held at the New Year. Since the pronouncement of Yahweh's judgment is thought to have occupied a prominent position at this festival, the importance of judgment in the prophecies, as well as the giving of destinies (Joel 3:1) and even the remnant concept (Obad. 17) are called upon in support of this association. Yet there is little real evidence in any of these passages requiring a link with the Temple or the New Year festival. Furthermore, is it possible that those canonical prophets who criticised the practices and teachings of official Yahwism, were able to gain acceptance by the cult for their message? The prophets differed so sharply from the Temple teachers that they can hardly have been closely identified with the religious establishment.

The individual commentaries are somewhat uneven. The best section is that on Obadiah, on which Watts has already published an earlier study (Eerdmans, 1970). The notes are particularly helpful, including an excellent discussion of the main theme of the prophecy as expressed in v. 21: "Dominion shall belong to the LORD". The least satisfying treatment is on Jonah, which is conceived purely as a dramatic satire. The commentary is very brief, insufficient even for the needs of sixth form students. Greater attention, for instance, could be devoted to the reasons for Jonah's disobedience, while it would be more accurate to refer to Kuyunjik as the most important area of Nineveh archaeologically rather than Nebi Yunus, where little excavation has been performed.

On the positive side, several details are included for those readers who have a general interest in Biblical subjects, but with no detailed knowledge of the minor prophets. Well-known passages such as Joel 2: 28ff. and Hab. 2: 4 are given special attention and related to their New Testament context. Major theological terms, including sin, faith, repentance, and salvation are also briefly described, though the definitions are sometimes expressed rather inadequately. For example, sin is "not the breaking of the law, but treason against a rightful ruler" (p. 163, on Zeph. 1: 17), while "faith and repentance mean to count on his [i.e., the Lord's] coming and to turn one's hope to the coming Lord" (p. 31, on Joel 2: 12ff.).

Despite these weaknesses, those for whom the commentary is designed will find much guidance in this important but neglected section of the Old Testament.

MARTIN J. SELMAN.

*The Undoing of Babel: Watson Kirkconnell, The Man and His Work.*  
 Edited by J. R. C. Perkin. McClelland & Stewart, 1975. 128pp.  
 \$7.95.

Those who were present at the Jubilee Congress of the Baptist World Alliance in London in 1955 may remember that the Canadian response to the Roll Call came from Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, then President of the Baptist Federation of Canada. Any who have had contact with Dr. Kirkconnell, however slight, will have recognised an unusual personality, of rare learning and industry, with many enthusiasms rare in Baptist circles.

It was a happy thought to mark his 80th birthday with a volume of essays on six of his major interests. From 1948 to 1964 Dr. Kirk-

connell was President of Acadia University and the volume has been fittingly and attractively edited by Dr. J. R. C. Perkin, now the head of the Department of Religious Studies there.

The present President, Dr. J. R. M. Beveridge, contributes a brief biographical sketch and there follow papers on Milton studies, Canadian Ethnic Literary and Cultural Perspectives (a recognition of Dr. Kirkconnell's knowledge of and enthusiasm for the Slavic elements now to be found there), one in French on the place of the Humanities in Canadian education, the Cleopatra theme in World Literature up to 1700, changing emphases in the study of Classical History, and Translating for Liturgy. There is also a selective bibliography, running to over twenty pages, of Dr. Kirkconnell's multitudinous writings. With competence in more than forty languages, he is indeed a remarkable polymath, and he has been a poet, as well as the translator of other men's verses. Would that this side of his output could have been more fully illustrated!

The last of the essays is a welcome contribution by Dr. Perkin himself. Since he left Altrincham for Canada, his friends in England have heard all too little about his activities as teacher and broadcaster. He here writes of the difficulties of preparing accurate and up-to-date renderings of Scripture, which suit congregational needs as to style and rhythm. Dr. Perkin gives a few examples of his own work. More can be found among the responsive readings in *The Hymnal of the Canadian Baptist Federation*, published in 1973. The Rev. and Mrs. John Matthews, of Swindon, are among those in this country who have shown themselves aware of the need in this field and the difficulties in the way of meeting it. Dr. Perkin's essay, like the others in this rich little volume, will interest many outside Canada.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

*Charles I's Lord Treasurer: Sir Richard Weston, Earl of Portland.*  
Michael van Cleave Alexander. London: Macmillan, 1975. xvi,  
261pp. £10.

This book is a great deal more cautious and scholarly than the foreword by A. L. Rowse might lead one to suppose. It is an attempt to do belated justice, so Dr. Alexander affirms, to Richard Weston (1577-1635) who served Charles I for over six years as his chief minister. However, his biographer is hampered by a lack of family and personal papers which result in the study being largely one of Weston's life and

times. Consequently the character of the Lord Treasurer himself never comes into clear focus.

It was not until the parliament of 1626 that Weston's identification with the royal policies and the Duke of Buckingham was seen to be complete and earned him the unpopularity which was to mark the rest of his career. After the assassination of Buckingham Weston himself came to power quite swiftly and, to do him justice, sought to modify government policies.

There can be no doubt that while attempting to build his personal fortune from the king's service the Lord Treasurer also urged economies on the court and the king. It is probable that the amounts Weston made were not wholly unreasonable in a generation when statesmen had no adequate salary and were expected to make profits from their office. The most important argument of the book is, perhaps, the suggestion that Weston was the architect of the policy of Charles I's personal rule. While the author refurbishes some older arguments for the supposed benefits of the personal rule, the confrontation policies of the two villains of the story, William Laud and Thomas Wentworth, were bound to wreck it. This knowledge the Lord Treasurer was spared by his death in 1635.

The book is valuable as a sympathetic attempt to explain one man's career in the context of the faction fights in the later years of James I and the early years of his son to the point where Weston could really hope to influence a greedy court and his spendthrift sovereign. But he must have known that his attempts to balance the royal books were doomed before his death: he can hardly have foreseen the greater tragedies which would befall his master thereafter.

B. R. WHITE.

*The Levellers and the English Revolution.* Edited by G. E. Aylmer. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975. 180pp. £4.50. (Paperback £1.95).

This book provides a fine way in to the study of the Levellers. In his introduction, Professor G. E. Aylmer of York University summarises, in the best short account now available, the state of Leveller studies before printing extracts from fourteen of the most important documents from the Levellers and their leaders. At the same time, his annotated bibliography constitutes a sound guide to further reading in the subject.

Naturally enough the documents here presented are only a part of the output of the leading Levellers and their sympathisers. Other modern editions of complete pieces were provided by A. S. P. Woodhouse in *Puritanism and Liberty*, D. M. Wolfe (1944) and W. Haller and G. Davis (1944).

While most Baptist historians are aware that Henry Denne was involved with the Levellers for a time the full extent of Baptist support for and, in the case of such leaders as William Kiffin, later conflict with the Leveller party has never been carefully studied. It must be remembered that Pauline Gregg in *Freeborn John* (1961) drew attention to Kiffin's early friendship with John Lilburne, to their being fellow apprentices in the 1630's in London, and to the help Kiffin gave him during his later troubles. Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about this period is the fact that while so much intense attention has been given to its study by historians so many questions still await a satisfactory answer. This book will certainly help to whet the interest of non-specialists.

B. R. WHITE.

*Two Calvinistic Methodist Chapels, 1743-1811*, edited by Edwin Welch. London Record Society, 1975. xix, 108pp. £4.50. Available from Brian Burch (Hon. Secretary, LRS), Leicester University Library, University Road, Leicester.

The two chapels are the London Tabernacle and Spa Fields. This volume, however, is not simply the story of two places of worship. They were important in the eighteenth century as the principal chapels and headquarters of two different forms of Calvinistic Methodism—George Whitefield's Connexion and that of the Countess of Huntingdon respectively. The purpose of the London Record Society is to publish and stimulate interest in archives relating to London. This welcome volume, published with the help of a grant from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust, makes available in printed form not only the Minutes of the Tabernacle (1743-7) and Spa Fields (1778-1811), but also the English Calvinistic Methodist Association Minutes (1745-9), the Fifteen Articles of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and its Plan of Association (1790).

The editor, and those who have encouraged and backed him in his careful and painstaking work, deserve the thanks of all who are interested in learning more about a somewhat neglected aspect of

English religious life in the eighteenth century. The text of the archives themselves, together with the introduction and footnotes, provide a fascinating glimpse of the affairs of the two chapels and of the English Calvinistic Methodist movement in general. The usefulness of the book is further enhanced by an index.

A comparison of the records of the two Connexions shows that they were quite different in a number of ways. Baptists will, undoubtedly, feel more at home in reading through the minutes of the Tabernacle, where members had a more responsible share in decision making than was the case at Spa Fields. Within the Countess's chapel her iron hand is evident in virtually every decision. The records provide illuminating insights into the life and organisation of both Connexions. For instance, we read of a workshop, a rudimentary employment exchange and a school for members' children at the Tabernacle. Some of the most fascinating entries in the Spa Fields minutes are accounts of ordinations, which were grand affairs lasting all day. Even so, the "experiences" of ordinands or even a sermon sometimes had to be omitted because they had run out of time!

There are references in the English Calvinistic Methodist Association minutes to two Baptists who were associated for a time with the movement. One, Philip Gibbs, left the Association in 1748, when he became pastor of the Baptist church in the Pigmarket at Plymouth; the other, "Brother Sleep" (Samuel Sleep of Chesham?) is described as a Baptist minister already.

The editor of this volume is to be congratulated on his achievement, as is the London Record Society for its good judgment in selecting archives of this kind for publication. It has set a lead which, it is hoped, will be followed by other local record societies.

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