

him?" A. "Because he is the Saviour of the world". Q. "How is he the Saviour of the world?" A. "By the Father's designation and sending", (II, 683). Is this evidence that Bunyan was not the author of this work because it teaches a general atonement?

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 102.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 349.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 353.

PAUL HELM.

## Reviews

*Churches and Church-Goers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* By R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. 244 pp. £12.50.

This joint work represents an important attempt to apply statistical and sociological tools to the study of religion in Britain over the past two and a half centuries. The contents are equally divided between some thirty-four carefully assembled statistical tables and a 120-page essay which seeks to interpret their significance. Though the authors have done all within their powers to make sure that the statistics are soundly compiled, their assemblage ought not to be allowed to secure for them an authority beyond their due. It would be good if other scholars were to submit the figures here presented to close scrutiny both in terms of the validity of each series (e.g. the equation of baptisms with new church members in the Baptist series) and their comparability, especially since the figures relate to the whole of the British Isles (and here again readers of this journal will recognise that the Baptist series in recent years presents peculiar problems). These considerations are important, for any deductions from the figures must depend upon the reliability of the primary calculations.

These statistics are applied by the authors to a discussion of a particular view of church growth. They argue that the population of the British Isles has become disinclined to serious religious involvement "by the Reformation, by civic tolerance and secularization", and deduce, "In these conditions, churches cannot directly recruit a population already socialized but must engage in a religious socialization quite apart from, and prior to, their recruitment activities proper" (p. 7). Allied to this deduction is the distinction made between auto-genous and allogenuous growth, that is between growth from within the families of church members (what is elsewhere called biological growth) and growth from the wider population (conversion growth).

Study of the statistics shows remarkable correlations of patterns of growth and decline amongst all the major Protestant denominations, in contrast to the growth of Roman Catholicism and of certain sects (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists) which correlate strongly amongst themselves though negatively against the mainstream churches. From this the authors deduce the limitation of influence of special features intrinsic to the history of each particular church and the greater influence of general environmental factors (p. 37).

By contrast over a period of time, the authors discern a cycle of growth which they interpret as being consonant with the thinking of such writers on revival as Sprague and Finney. The pattern consists of five phases: depression, activation, revival, deactivation and declension. In the first period, the churches are small in relationship to the communities in which they are set; despite good potential for recruitment, little is achieved because expectations are low. In the period of activation a change of expectation leads to marked success in evangelism, but as the pool of mere adherence is exhausted by this process, so the potential for further growth becomes more problematical; a period of deactivation then sets in and is encouraged by high losses amongst unrooted converts, leading to a loss of confidence amongst the church members. In the final period of declension alien growth is minimal, and the only growth is that related to the church's own demography.

The authors further posit that in a secular situation where the churches have little social reputation, they cannot, despite great outlay of capital and labour, achieve high growth rates and suggest that in order to obtain net gains they "must abandon attempts at *direct* recruitment of a population, already made responsive to recruitment by other agencies (such as other churches or earlier generations) and institute a system of *indirect* recruitment which involves, first a religious socialization quite distinct from membership, and then, and only then, recruitment to membership itself" (p. 85). This is the function, they argue, that Sunday Schools fulfilled in the period before 1870, but with the provision of state education and the competition of the leisure facilities of the media, it has ceased to be so. By contrast, they suggest that increasing mobility has provided very many more occasions on which people may decide to break with their practice of church-going. These connections seem plausible, but other attempts at establishing relationships are much more conjectural, as for example the suggested connexion between economic slump and membership decline, or the hypothesising of the curbing of Anglican growth by the Boer War.

Relatively little attention is given to the internal life of the churches—prayer, worship, the search for a biblical theology, and other aspects of spirituality—for the deduction is that church growth depends not so much on rival ecclesiastical policies as on the impact of external factors beyond a church's control (p. 1). In so far as the figures quoted

are all national figures this deduction may be legitimate. The question which is not raised by this book is why different local churches, faced with the same external pressures, respond so differently, and here maybe there never will emerge any statistics capable of suggesting a valid explanation.

JOHN BRIGGS.

*Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain: the Attempt to Legislate for Belief.* By James Bentley. Oxford University Press, 1978. £6.50.

Early in the second half of the nineteenth century it became manifest that High Church Anglicanism had entered upon a new phase associated with a marked development of ritualistic practice. As a matter of principle it was vitally important to the innovators that their practices should have the Church's authorization and they believed that this was the case. However, this pious conviction was not shared by others, among them A. C. Tait, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The reaction provoked by the ritualists was considerable and the outcome was the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act (1874), the subject of this study. The passing of the Act and the events surrounding it appeared to the author to provide an exceptional illustration of the inter-action of politics, theology and popular religion and his book fully justifies that judgment.

The heart of it is a detailed examination of the passing of the Bill. It is a not very edifying story, yielding its quota of insensitivity, naivety, muddle and expediency in both political and ecclesiastical circles; and providing another example of that amateurishness to which, as Dr. Edward Norman has said, Christian leaders tend in the very professional business of political tactics. Mr. Bentley discloses the manoeuvres of the various parties with considerable skill and in opening up the story draws on a rich variety of sources, some of them hitherto untapped. There are two introductory chapters providing the background to the events of 1874. One of the interesting questions into which he does not delve too deeply is what lay behind this ritualist interest. He observes that it was part of an ecclesiastical reflection of the increasing love of ornament which was a feature of Victorian life. He also takes note of Roman Catholic influence. Nevertheless there is room for further enquiry on this point. What weight, for example, should be attached to the claim made by some of the ritualists that they were prompted by pastoral and evangelistic concerns?

The Act was swiftly discredited. In retrospect it seems quite astounding that certain clergy were actually imprisoned. That, of course, brought about a foreseeable reaction which came to a climax when Archbishop Benson, Tait's successor, put Bishop King of Lincoln on trial. Benson only did this under a sense of legal obligation;

his actual judgment upheld King in almost every respect. Even Tait who had been so intimately involved in the promulgation of the Act realised that it had been a blunder.

This monograph is by intention closely focused and does not attempt to set the story in the broader perspective of British Christianity as a whole. That does not detract unduly from its usefulness. It is a scholarly study providing valuable material for more than one facet of modern church history.

G. W. RUSLING.

---

## The Oxford Dictionary of Saints

D. H. Farmer

'The author of this deceptively slim work manages to achieve the almost impossible. . . . He has tackled the subject with objectivity and thoroughness. . . . He breathes life into his scholarship and has produced a dictionary which makes compulsive reading.' *The Tablet*. £7.50

## Portrait of Jesus

Alan T. Dale

'What I have tried to make clear', wrote Alan Dale, 'is the kind of man Jesus was, what he stood for and what he had to say, how he came to his death, and what account his friends gave of what happened after that death.' Illustrated £3.25

---

## Oxford University Press

---