

Reviews

William Carey. By Mary Drewery. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978. 203 pp. £4.95.

Many biographies of William Carey have been published. Most are now out of print, but a few written within the last twenty years are still available. Mary Drewery's can stand alongside them. The author's aim was to study and write "the personal life of this extraordinary man and the effect on it of the momentous times through which he lived". The result is a pleasantly written story that moves at a steady pace. The familiar Carey stories are included, the counterfeit coin, the reluctance of his wife to go to India, the printing house fire, and others.

For those who know nothing of Carey this biography will be a good introduction but they should be aware of a number of errors that will be spotted immediately by readers who are familiar with Carey's life and work. Christopher Anderson did not become a secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society after Fuller (p. 46). He, with Samuel Hope, carried much responsibility for the Serampore Mission which supported the Serampore missionaries financially and by advocacy at home from 1827 to 1837. Failure to recognize this separate body means that some of the details on p. 196 are also incorrect. John Kiernandier did not die in 1786 (p. 67), but on 10th May 1799. The church he built was enlarged in 1793 and his successor, Rev. David Brown, invited him to administer the Lord's Supper to a large congregation. Carey visited him in 1794 and wrote that Kiernandier had encouraged him. Mary Drewery's statement that he left no mark seems very questionable. Bow Bazaar and Lall Bazaar are two interchangeable names for the same place, so there were not two churches (p. 139). The contract for the land was signed on 26th February 1806 and the hut of 1806 was followed by the building of 1809. The missionaries had been holding services in the area from 1801 (not 1803), but it was in 1803 that the room of Mr. Peter Lindeman, the undertaker, became available. It was never popular because people objected to "wade Sunday after Sunday through a range of coffins and other emblems of mortality".

Mary Drewery claims that the Carey portraits in Regent's Park College are originals, but as recently as 1973 the catalogue of *The British in India* exhibition made it clear that the portrait of Carey and his pundit owned by the BMS was painted in Calcutta c. 1812. Has any new evidence come to light since 1973?

It was not William Ward's son who went to Sumatra (p. 172). It was his nephew.

The errors tend to confirm the opinion formed from the tenor of the whole book. It is not a careful evaluation of Carey's life and work set within the context of the whole work of the BMS, but a popular life-story. To that extent Mary Drewery has done well part of the task which she set herself.

BASIL AMEY.

Holding the Fort: studies in Victorian revivalism. By John Kent. London: Epworth Press, 1978. 381 pp. £9.50.

"This is not a detailed history of nineteenth-century revivalism", writes its author, "but a discussion of its significance . . .". Hence Professor Kent produces a wide range of his own very striking ideas on the theme without always feeling the need to substantiate them. Many of the ideas, despite the lack of evidence, are plausible and stimulating, such as the suggestion that revivalism was partly an attempt to restore a sense of the immediacy of divine activity in the world to a society whose belief in providence was decaying. Other ideas, however, may be less comprehensible to most readers. We are told, for instance, that a type of conversion-experience is "discussed by a phenomenologist like Merleau-Ponty, who stresses this quality of character-accumulation, as opposed to Jean-Paul Sartre's picture of an individual whose character is all the time future-directed". No further explanation is offered. But it is in similar *obiter dicta* that much of the value of the book lies.

Professor Kent concentrates chiefly on the periodic impact of American revivalism on Britain. The Americans, he believes, invented the organised revival as a means of recruiting a new generation of church members. The first revivalist to shape British practice was the striking figure of Lorenzo Dow. "His hair", wrote a contemporary, "reached to the bottom of the cuff of his coat sleeve; and his beard covered his breast." It is perhaps no wonder that the early Primitive Methodists took him for a prophet. The next study moves on to 1859, which, the author claims with justification, cannot be taken as the time of a "Second Evangelical Awakening". A hundred pages are allocated to Moody and Sankey. Moody's themes are carefully scrutinised, and it is argued that Sankey's domestic images of heaven supplanted earlier, richer versions in popular Evangelicalism. We learn that Queen Victoria declined to attend one of their meetings because "it is not the sort of religious performance which I like". It also emerges that Moody was treated as a counter-blast to Anglo-Catholic missions to London in 1869 and 1874. A final section on holiness revivalism reveals the extent to which the early Salvation Army was indebted for its teaching to an American, Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, and dissects the Brighton convention in 1875 that lay behind the Keswick tradition. This helps explain the background to the conviction which remains so powerful amongst Baptists, as amongst others, that believers can be delivered from sin by faith alone and so achieve "victory".

The reader is inevitably struck by an apparent lack of sympathy in the author for his subject. Professor Kent asks, "what was wrong with a society in which a section of the middle-classes, more or less well-educated, spent their emotional life on Keswick, for example, and a cult of pseudo-perfectionism?" It is doubtful whether this is the right kind of question to be asking: after all, a quest for the supremely good life has been considered rational in most societies. There are in the book a number of debatable assumptions, such as that the working classes, as a whole, were alienated from the churches. Some details are misleading: Baptist Noel did not deplore Spurgeon's negative attitude to biblical criticism in the Downgrade Controversy, for instance, not least because he died fourteen years earlier. And what are we to make of the suggestion that in 1875 Spurgeon overlooked "the normal Baptist objection to instrumental music in religious services"? Yet it is a great service to have cast a critical eye on topics all too often considered to be beyond the historian's ken. Professor Kent has opened up fresh fields for historical inquiry. Many of his striking ideas should prove to be fruitful hypotheses.

D. W. BEBBINGTON.

Robert Mackintosh: Theologian of Integrity. By Alan P. F. Sell. Bern: Peter Lang, 1977. 107 pp.

Alan Sell supplies a short biography, a longer introduction to the thought and a list of the writings of Robert Mackintosh (1858-1933), a Scottish Presbyterian turned Congregationalist who taught at the Lancashire Independent College, Manchester. Mackintosh reacted against the Calvinism of the Presbyterians, being particularly disturbed by the doctrine of double predestination. "Calvinism knows nothing of God's character, except that He is an inflexible lawgiver. The revealed character of God is represented as condemning the sinner." But fundamental to Mackintosh was the personal experience of God's grace in Christ. This evangelical persuasion influenced his understanding of Biblical authority, the place of sacraments and the task of theology. He held that Scriptures do not have to be infallible for them to achieve their purpose of bringing us into contact with God and Christ. Sacraments have no grace peculiar to them as sacraments, because they supply nothing not accessible to simple faith alone. Natural theology and philosophy have a place, but Christian theology is truly a study of redemption and the revealed grace of God in Christ.

Sell's motive for this study is his persuasion that Mackintosh has insights pertinent to today's theological and ecumenical debate. That claim, which would be worth pressing further, is only briefly expounded. However, we are given a readable, well-documented and researched introduction to a seldom studied theologian.

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