

Reviews

Microfilm Catalog: Baptist Historical Materials on Microfilm. Published by Historical Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, Tenn. 37234.

The microfilm holdings of the Historical Commission in Nashville now number some ten million pages. The material is primarily American, but there are considerable holdings of English, European, African and Latin American materials. The 1977 catalogue, with the supplements published in 1978 and 1979, is now available in the Baptist Historical Society library at Church House.

Annual publications, church records, early books, hundreds of doctoral theses, and transcripts of oral history, are now available on microfilm. The catalogue is an important resource document.

There is a further catalogue which deals with historical materials on Baptists and Evangelical Christians in Russia and other eastern European countries. The materials come from three sources. There are articles, journals and books of the Christian communities; a number of books by Orthodox Christians in the Tsarist period, mainly attacking evangelicals: and books by Marxists critical of the Church. The latter material comes in the main from the Lenin State Library in Moscow. This collection has been gathered by Albert Wardin, Professor of History at Belmont College, Nashville, and will add considerably to the availability of material in the West connected with Evangelical Christianity in communist lands.

ROGER HAYDEN

The Baptist Heritage Series. Published by the Historical Commission, S.B.C., Nashville. \$1.

This series of ten brightly coloured, illustrated, brief pamphlets published for the American Baptist market, are a fine example of how to present Baptist history and thought imaginatively. Lynn May, author of the first pamphlet, *The Baptist Story*, and editor of the series is to be congratulated. Though the series is geared to the Southern Baptist story, one or two of the pamphlets could well be used among English Baptists. *Baptist Beginnings* by Prof. H. Leon McBeth, is an informative survey of General and Particular Baptist origins. *Baptists and Religious Liberty* by S. L. Hasty, of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, though aimed at the American scene, would certainly give a new dimension to this theme among English Baptists. *Crises in Baptist Life*, by Walter B. Shurden, of Louisville, looks at the Missions, Racial and Landmark crises which have

deeply affected American Baptists. Through such crises Baptists have discovered that "where there is freedom, strife goes with life". They are also the area for debating moral issues of supreme importance, and must not be shirked. From such liberty comes very positive results. This series is the Southern Baptist Historical Commission at its best.

ROGER HAYDEN

Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 by R. T. Kendall. Oxford University Press. 1980. 238 pp. £12.50.

The theology of the Westminster Assembly (1643-49) "hardly deserves to be called Calvinistic, especially if that term is to imply the thought of Calvin himself. . . . The time is surely overdue that historical theology present a more accurate picture of what really happened between Calvin's era and that which witnessed the emergence of Westminster theology."

Such is the arresting conclusion of R. T. Kendall's doctoral thesis, for which Dr Barrie White, our President, was supervisor. The author demonstrates that the English Puritans — from Elizabethan times until 1649 — were "experimental predestinarians", and they followed the theology of Beza rather than Calvin. Fundamentally the thesis is a careful examination of terms. *Faith* — is it primarily a matter of the intellect (persuasion), or of the emotions, or of the will? *Assurance* — how can we know we are saved? Is salvation entirely the decree of God, or is our *response* to the grace of God involved, and our continuing *experience* as believers?

Faith, according to Calvin, is the activity of God; it is not subjective response. Faith is knowledge imparted as opposed to the submission of man in repentance ("voluntarism"). Faith precedes repentance as grace precedes law. But Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva, modified this emphasis, and Dr Kendall proceeds to show how English Calvinists worked out the implications — and this was the cause of the introspection and legalism to which English Puritans were prone.

The views of William Perkins were expounded, modified and clarified, particularly by William Ames. But the insights of some twenty English Puritans are carefully reviewed. While holding firmly to the doctrine of election and reprobation, Perkins' theology of conversion discloses finally that it is *man's will* after all which must be moved before saving faith may be truly said to have emerged. 'It is the change in our hearts which gives us assurance that we are called, elected' — an introspection against which Calvin warned. Most experimental predestinarians were pastors who vigorously stressed that one's election must be known in Christian experience (see 1 Pet. 1.10). Assurance of salvation comes "if our conversation be truly religious and our profession beautified with the works of piety, mercie, and our upright Christian dealing in the whole of our lives" (Dod). "The grace wrought in the Gospel is not a mere persuasion but a powerful work of the Spirit, entertaining with the soul and changing it and altering and turning the bent and inclination of the will heavenward" (Sibbes).

Both the divine initiative and the human response of obedience are

stressed by John Preston. "There is also an act of will required which is to take and receive Christ." The chapter on Thomas Hooker amplifies the emphasis on faith as "voluntarism" and leads on to a valuable parenthesis on Jacob Arminius. Kendall claims that his doctrine of faith is no different from that of the experimental predestinarian tradition. *God* has elected those who come to believe. If one believes — he is elected; if he does not come to believe, he is non-elect. Man has freedom, grace is not irresistible.

William Ames brought the issues to sharper focus. "The knowledge of faith is that reflex act which is proper to man, whereby he hath power as it were to enter into and perceive what he is in himself." Repentance precedes faith. Ames goes further: "The whole burthen of assurance is grounded in our works; and endeavour to abound in vertue and to do good works is the only means to make our calling and election sure."

The "Westminster theology" as Kendall calls it, for all its deference to John Calvin, consistently uses voluntaristic words: accepting, receiving, assenting, resting, yielding, answering, embracing. The Westminster divines separated faith and assurance. "Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it." While the theology is structured on predestination, affirming that salvation is utterly the gift of God, the Westminster doctrine none the less "tends to put the responsibility for salvation right back to man".

The earliest Baptists were Arminians whereas the Particular Baptists were Calvinists. Chapter ten reminds us that these two theological schools were not as far apart as is often supposed. John Smyth and Thomas Helwys certainly affirmed that the initiative in salvation is with God who elects us; yet there is a proper place for man in his freedom to respond to the grace of God — and grace is not irresistible. Man is free to repent, and come to faith — and so to believers' baptism (i.e. voluntarism, experience, testimony). The logic of an extreme emphasis on predestination is that faith is the gift of God, and precedes repentance, and infant baptism as passive acceptance of that grace. But maybe the insight of experimental predestinarians is more consistent with the insights of the Particular Baptists.

Dr Kendall's book is well written, and carefully documented. Because of the complexity of the arguments surveyed, it calls the reader to close concentration.

N. S. MOON