

NOTES

- 1 This article is based on the Church Book belonging to St Andrew's Street Church, Cambridge, which Robinson wrote and which I transcribed in the winter of 1983/84. I have quoted extensively from the book. It will be published by the Society as No.2 in its *English Baptist Records* series.
- 2 G. Dyer, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Robert Robinson*, London 1796.
- 3 B. Flower, 'Memoir of R. Robinson' in *Robinson's Miscellaneous Works*, vol.1, London 1807
- 4 William Robinson, 'Memoir' in *R. Robinson: Select Works*, London 1861
- 5 Bogue & Bennett, *History of the Dissenters*, vol.IV, p.474.
- 6 W. T. Whitley, *History of the British Baptists*, revised edition 1932, p.214.
- 7 J. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, vol.IV, 1830, p.452.
- 8 *ibid.* p.457
- 9 A. C. Underwood, *History of the English Baptists*, 1947, p.139
- 10 G. Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, London 1955, preface.
- 11 William Robinson, as cited by Underwood, *op.cit.*, p.139.

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REVIEW

Pastors and People: The Biography of a Baptist Church, Queen's Road, Coventry by Clyde Binfield, published by Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry, 1984.

I must begin by declaring a bias in favour of this book. From my childhood days the Queen's Road buildings were familiar to me, for a large photograph of them, taken at the turn of the century, hung upon the wall of my parents' bedroom. It was a presentation to my father who had been one of the earliest student assistants from Bristol to work for a year in Queen's Road with W. E. Blomfield. Indeed, it was amongst my father's papers that I discovered the document referred to on page 114 of Dr Binfield's book, describing a Plan of Church Work set by Blomfield for my father. Then again, two of my predecessors as Principal of the Baptist College in Bristol had been ministers at Queen's Road, namely W. J. Henderson and Arthur Dakin. Two of its more recent ministers, Gordon Hastings and Richard Hamper, were fellow students with me in College at Oxford and I remember with real affection Townley Lord and Ingli James, both of whom were very good to me at the beginning of my own ministry. On a number of occasions I have preached in Queen's Road, and have known something of its more recent life. So it was that I came to this book with great anticipation. On the whole, that anticipation was rewarded.

This is a book that all serious students of Baptist history should read. It shows Baptist tradition at its best. For it tells so very clearly the story of a church set within an ever-changing context of a City and of that church making conscious and constant endeavours to make its life and witness relevant to the society round about. It is the story of a Baptist church which went from strength to strength, independent in its attitude, but never isolated from the denomination. A church determined to maintain a strong pulpit, unafraid of becoming involved in relevant controversies of the time, but remarkably free from involvement in denominational theological squabbles. It is a story which will bring a considerable amount of pleasure to those who know Queen's Road intimately, and a vast amount of information to those who do not. The book is illustrated with pictures of former ministers and members, together with church groups and church buildings.

The story of the church is traced from its beginnings, briefly through the events of the 18th century, and then in very great detail as the church emerges clearly and remarkably into the light of history in the 19th and on into the 20th century.

Dr Binfield has entitled the book *Pastors and People*. There can be few, if any, churches which have had such a distinguished succession of pastors over the past century, beginning with W. J. Henderson, continuing through Blomfield, Emery, Dakin and on into the present day. Contrast is drawn between L. H. Marshall and Townley Lord, and there can be little doubt how different the next minister, Ingham James, was from either of his two predecessors. If ever the phrase 'richness in diversity' was illustrated, it is in the succession of pastors with which Queen's Road has been blessed. To a reader who does not belong to Queen's Road, the book flows most interestingly and most effectively when the author is writing about the Pastors. It may well be that for members of Queen's Road, the detailed information about the various families who, throughout the generations, made up Queen's Road, will be of particular interest. But it has to be said that the narrative tends to slow up and indeed become lost in detail in some of the pages dealing with those families. Perhaps this is inevitable if one is seeking to illustrate the extraordinary part played in the life of Queen's Road by successive generations of lay men and women. For it is evident that the strength of Queen's Road, as the story unfolds, lies not only in the remarkable succession in the pulpit, but also in the remarkable succession in the pews. It is not only that the people came to listen to the preachers as regular worshippers, but that they came also to be committed to the on-going life of the church, not only, nor so much, within the walls of the church premises, but out in the City of Coventry and indeed out into the whole world. There is a relevant comment from W. E. Blomfield on page 131, to a question asking him about the place of politics in the pulpit. Blomfield said, 'We have, besides the Education question, great political questions now to the front such as the housing of the poor, the drink curse, the persecution of Christians in the East. For the pulpit to leave these questions severely alone would be tantamount to an admission that the laws of Christ have no application to the grave problems of the hour. And if the Church is silent about such things, no wonder that the toiling masses turn away...'

It is fascinating to read the story of the Rate War of the early 20th century, of the passive resistance to the payment of the Church rate in which a number of Coventry Baptists as a result of refusal were sentenced to Prison for that refusal, and the way in which Queen's Road members supported those who were prepared to go to Prison rather than pay. Ministers were amongst those who refused to pay the Rates and were faced with a distraint of their goods to the value of those Rates. Whether Blomfield missed what he lost by such action on the part of the authorities, namely 'An Alphabetical Arrangement of the Words in the Hebrew Talmud translated into German' may perhaps be open to question, but the matter of principle was established!

The writing of history can never be and should never be an end in itself. Along with the important contribution that this book makes as a record of the remarkable story of Queen's Road, there is also a relevant reminder to everybody in the denomination and beyond of how a church in the midst of a community can, through faithful preaching, loyal laity, and spiritual courage, maintain faithfulness to the Gospel, a faithfulness which leads not only to the conversion of men and women, but also to the establishment of a fairer and juster society. Hopefully the denomination of today will take note of the lessons of yesterday.

W. M. S. WEST



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