

## BRETHREN AND BAPTISTS IN SCOTLAND

- 50 Cf. Brian Mills, 'The Present Position', in *Christian Brethren Review Journal*, 37, 1986, pp.27-9.
- 51 Graham Brown and Brian Mills, 'The Brethren' Today, Exeter, 1980, p.20.
- 52 Cf. Balfour, in Bebbington, *Baptists in Scotland*, p.67.
- 53 Partnership Survey of Brethren Assemblies, 1988. To be published by the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship in 1991.

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ed. M. Griffin, *The President Speaks: Annual Addresses Delivered to the National Baptist Convention of America, 1898-1986*, National Baptist Convention of America, Incorporated, 1987

Records of black Baptist churches in the USA date back to the late eighteenth century, but it was not until 1836 that the first regional association of black churches - the Providence Association in Ohio - was founded, and four years later the American Baptist Missionary Convention, the first general body of black Baptists. The Civil War led to a breakdown of national organizations and it was not until the founding of the Baptist Missionary Convention (1880), of the American National Baptist Convention (1886, not 1856 as here recorded), and the National Baptist Convention (1893), that national bodies re-emerged, which in 1895 merged to form the National Baptist Convention.

Dr Griffin, the historian of the National Baptist Convention, in compiling this collection, has made available a very useful collection of material illustrative of the developing opinion of the leadership of that convention, embracing both presidential accounts of their stewardship of their office in 'States of the Union' type assessments, and fascinating examples of black exhortation and preaching. The addresses of eight presidents are each preceded by a useful biographical sketch of the man concerned. Some twenty-eight addresses are included, one more than the years covered, with two for 1916, Edward Jones's to the unincorporated convention and that of Elias Morris, the former president, to the incorporated convention, the pages of self-defence to this day reflecting the height of the tension that split the body at that time.

The existence now of four different black conventions in the USA calls for some explanation. As indicated, the first split occurred in 1915: the issue concerned the convention's control of its Publishing Board, and in particular the vesting of its property in the name of the Convention rather than the Board and its officers. Those who were most closely related to the Publishing Board, successful in the law suit over the Publication Board's property, formed the unincorporated body, whilst the other part of the convention learnt from this experience the desirability of becoming incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia, as the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated.

In 1961 a further split took place over the strong leadership exercised by J. H. Jackson over the incorporated body and the Progressive National Baptist Convention was formed by a group of younger leaders. More recently, in the years 1986-8, the unincorporated convention has itself sought incorporation, again because of disputes over the ownership of the publications wing of its work, so that it is now the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. Once more this has been at the expense of a split with the founding of the National Baptist Missionary Convention, the most recent body of black Baptists to come into being. However, the two original black bodies, now working together in a number of areas, enjoyed a join assembly in 1988.

JHYB

## THE PAYNE MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION 1991

### MISSION: HOME AND OVERSEAS

The Baptist Historical Society offers a prize of £75 for an essay on this theme, chosen with the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in mind. Home mission or home support as well as activities overseas fall within this brief, the essay may be an historical or contemporary study, and essays which are theological as well as historical treatments of the theme will be welcome.

The essay should be an original, unpublished composition, based on personal research, that has not already been awarded another prize. The text should not exceed 10,000 words, but the submission should also include whatever footnotes and bibliography are considered necessary. It should be in typescript or clear computer print-out.

There is no restriction of academic qualification, place of residence or religious profession on candidates. The winning essay, and any other deemed worthy, will be published in the Society's journal, *The Baptist Quarterly*. The Society reserves the right to make no award if an essay of sufficient merit is not submitted.

Candidates should send their essays to arrive on or before 31st December 1991, in envelopes marked 'Payne Memorial Essay Competition' and addressed to The Secretary, Baptist Historical Society, Bristol Baptist College, Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1UN.

*The Payne Memorial Essay Competition commemorates the life and work of the Revd Dr E. A. Payne CH (1902-80), General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, a Vice-President of the World Council of Churches and President of the Baptist Historical Society.*

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**Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, Epworth Press, 1989, xvi + 656 pp. £25.00.**

Since Wesley is probably one of the world's most famous half-known and inaccurately-known people, Henry Rack's comprehensive and truthful biography is greatly to be welcomed. In a 'Prelude' Mr Rack sets his subject in his socio-political and religious context, thereby providing the basis for his overall view of Wesley as 'a "reasonable enthusiast", combining religious values in some ways as radical as anything in the sixteenth-century Anabaptists and seventeenth-century Puritan Separatists with aspects of High Church polity, and clothing the whole in the language of Locke as well as that of the Bible.'

Part One takes us to 1738. We expect to meet Susanna and her encouragements to perfectionism, but Mr Rack can also tell us all we need to know about Westley Hall's temporary jilting of Wesley's sister Martha in favour of sister Kezziah. We expect to hear of the Holy Club, but its character and activities are here illuminated by recent research. Wesley's troubled relations with women, his obsessive private devotional discipline, the influence of the mystics - all are here. So too the Georgia adventure (and the 'selective and slanted' *Journal* account of it); the influence of the Moravians; and Sarah Hopkey, 'the worst of all the serpents in [Wesley's] Eden'. There follows an account of the Aldersgate Street experience in which the nature of the 'conversion' is closely examined, with special reference to Wesley's understanding of justification by grace through faith in relation to his earlier High Church convictions. An 'Interlude' on the origins of the Evangelical Revival

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follows. It is properly noted that the Revival did not begin with Wesley, and that there was more life in the older Dissent than has sometimes been allowed.

'John Wesley and the rise of Methodism (1738-60)' is the subject of Part Two. Wesley's practice, and his relations with evangelical Calvinists - notably Whitefield - are duly considered, and early frictions concerning the doctrine and order of the Church of England are noted. It becomes clear that, although Wesley has been depicted as an organisational zealot, most of what he did as his movement spread was unplanned: he reacted pragmatically to ever-changing situations. Charles Wesley, 'sweet singer and uneasy colleague' next takes the stage, to be followed by more women and the unfortunate marriage. Thence, *via* mobs, controversies and Evangelical Anglican and Dissenting rivals, to an 'Interlude' on 'Society and revival in the later eighteenth century'. The renewal of the High Church tradition, Sunday Schools, hyper-Calvinist and Arminian Baptists - all receive brief mention here.

Part Three concerns 'John Wesley and the consolidation of Methodism (1760-91)'. The crisis of the 1760s over perfectionism; Wesley's multifarious activities as evangelist, author, editor and educator, and his political stances, are deftly treated. Cold water is poured upon the notion that Methodism averted revolution in England. The careful chapter on 'Doctrine, devotion and social concern' contains a cautionary word to liturgiologists who might too swiftly assume *generally* high sacramentalism in Methodist worship. Further differences over perfectionism come into view. The Calvinistic and subscription controversies are next explored and Mr Rack clearly demonstrates the increasing incongruity between Wesley's profession of loyalty to the Church of England and the actions he took in the cause of evangelisation. The American 'problem' did much to bring matters to a head during the 1780s: the decade of Coke and the ordinations.

In a 'Postlude' Mr Rack adjusts himself to several of the verdicts which have been pronounced on Wesley and offers his own judicious assessment. The latter includes this characteristically honest statement: 'Although it may be felt that only by his hard-core character and commitment could Wesley have achieved what he did for Methodism, the human cost remained severe.'

Mr Rack has served us well. He has made good use of his numerous sources - many of them obscure; his judgments are well-founded. After his detailed probing of both the Wesley legend and the 'smoke-screen' which Wesley himself created in his writings, our author emerges as neither an hagiographer nor a debunker - and Wesley deserves neither. Mr Rack is cool - more reasonable than enthusiastic, perhaps - but not unkind. While he justifiably holds Wesley in high esteem, he also, understandably enough, finds him a most uncomfortable companion on occasion. Above all, this account is properly balanced. Historical, sociological, psychological and theological considerations find their due place, and on controversial points those who disagree with the author will be challenged to reconsider their positions.

To conclude: first, if this is who Wesley was (and impressive evidence will need to be adduced to convince us otherwise), Wesleyan Methodism's positive results can only have been of grace. Secondly, since Mr Rack has done so well, it will be some time before we really need another biography of Wesley - but doubtless uncovenanted mercies will yet descend upon us.

ALAN P. F. SELL, Professor of Christian Thought, *University of Calgary*

N. H. Keeble (ed.) *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus. Centenary Essays*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. 278pp. £30-00.

It is not often that one can say so of a symposium, but all the essays in this

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attractively sub-titled volume are well written and worth reading. The first two essays supplement each other. B. R. White stresses what Bunyan owed to the local fellowship of 'visible saints' and places him firmly within the network of contemporary Independency. R. L. Greaves presents Bunyan's convictions as intensely personal, with pastoral concerns predominant only in later life. Undismayed by imprisonment, Bunyan gained confidence from it, rather; but he was no plotter: he urged 'the necessity for Christians to suffer *actively* for righteousness by *willingly* embracing affliction' (p.40) - a position more usually associated with the Quakers he fiercely controverted.

Bunyan was also active against the Latitudinarians. In a trailer for her forthcoming *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, Isabel Rivers uses Bunyan's controversy with Fowler to sharpen the thrust of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. 'Two different versions of Christianity ... incomprehensible to each other' are here examined with an illuminating impartiality perhaps possible only to one in no way involved. This is balanced by some mannered, imaginative rhetoric from Gordon Wakefield, who not only shares Bunyan's faith and rejoices in it but sees it in the perspective of an age-long mystical spirituality.

Roger Sharrock writes of 'Bunyan and the Book'. Professor Sharrock's closeness to Bunyan over a generation and more enables him to ask *and answer* questions as varied as 'What did [Bunyan] mean when he wrote that he hoped "that my imprisonment might be an awakening to the Saints in the Country"?' and 'How far was he responsible for his text after delivering his manuscript to the printer?' In 'Bunyan and the Bible', John Knott jun. shows Bunyan as, in contrast with the Quakers, a literalist, who was none the less powerfully drawn to the Bible's figurative language; whether its texts stand over against him as if independent entities or whether he used the device of personifying its words, his 'almost physical sense of the force of Scripture' can make its words seem irresistible.

Roger Pooley delineates Bunyan's style. It is a 'plain' style; but so is the Quaker Edward Burrough's, and so is Tillotson's; yet how great the difference between Burrough's chaotic, incantatory invocations and Bunyan's more solid, conscious constructions, or between Bunyan's urgent second-person warnings and Tillotson's calming, cooling, third-person assurances. Pooley's own style has the transparency of a friend's conversation; Milo Kaufmann's, on 'Bunyan and the Mysteries of the Divine Will', is more opaque, but rewards attention. 'To see in one's life and world, by willing to see it, the diverse demonstration of an ordering providence, was to find (and co-operate in producing) that New Testament order which marked election' (p.186). This is high theology. By contrast, Gordon Campbell recalls Bunyan's lack of theological training - 'I ingenuously tell you, I know not what *paedo* means' (p.143) - and points to the 'gaffe' by which the Son appears at the centre of the Trinitarian triangle in Bunyan's diagrammatic 'Mapp of Salvation'. 'Soteriology is the focal point of Bunyan's theology' (p.146).

In what is perhaps the most professional contribution - he chooses his words so carefully that one feels it *must* be as he says! - Vincent Newey argues that in *Grace Abounding* 'the only permanent aspect of conversion is its incompleteness' (p.205), there is no genuine closure or conclusion: the conflict between vulnerability to human impulse and the 'confiding uncertainty', which is what faith, is continues, with glimpses of glory which to the end are intermittent and provisional. It is consistent with this that in *The Pilgrim's Progress* 'the absolutes it upholds are inscribed in an overall structure of indeterminacy' (p.213). Valentine Cunningham follows with a sparkling piece on 'Bunyan and Allegory', wittily if unwittingly drawing the threads together. 'Bunyan's allegories are offered as readable signs ... because they're modelled on biblical examples ... with a ready legibility', and 'Christ was the

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personification of that readability'. The marginal glossing too is glazing, not glozing: not giving a shine regardless of truth but 'an open window on to the allegories in the text'. Yet 'mysteries will remain'. 'Even Bunyan ... cannot erase all the rebus element of the Word'; the most enlightening hermeneutic has a hermetic character, and Moses' veil 'could slip back into place'; 'doubt ... can inhabit even Bunyan's margins'. 'Christian is on a venture': 'the conditional clause is always present'.

In conclusion the volume's editor, to whom it owes its conception and design, summarizes three hundred years of Bunyan studies, passing from the Augustan and the Evangelical Bunyan, via the Romantic and the Victorian, to the Modern Bunyan seen in terms of contextualisation and deconstruction. This is a distinguished piece of compression, secure in its sense of the flow of history.

'Yea, & it may be some of the Seed that I have sowed, shall spring up to some benefit of the dark unpeaceable World when I am dead'. So mused Richard Baxter in his *Dying Thoughts*. Bunyan is more robust: 'Give up ourselves, lay down our arms, and yield ..., we shall not; die upon the place we choose rather to do'. His spirited exchange with Justice Kelynge over his refusal to use the Prayer Book is mentioned a number of times in the volume under review; here is the conclusion Sir Owen Chadwick drew on another, less literary, occasion: 'No concession by a restored Church could have satisfied this conscience. Either he must be given freedom, or he must be suppressed. It took the State a further quarter of a century to learn that he could not be suppressed and must therefore be given freedom' (*From Uniformity to Unity 1662-1962*, 1962, p.10). In truth, Bunyan is as insuperable as he is inexhaustible.

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL

### **Occasional Papers of the General Baptist Assembly: a Note**

In the early years of this century the older General Baptist churches which with few exceptions became largely Unitarian in theology and allegiance had two sympathetic historians in W. H. Burgess (Unitarian) and W. T. Whitley (Baptist). Dr Payne had a particular interest in this little group of believers' churches and now their memory is being kept green through the enthusiasm of Leonard Maguire, Secretary of the General Baptist Assembly which still meets annually alongside the much larger Unitarian General Assembly. In 1986 the former body entrusted Mr Maguire with the editing of a series of Occasional Papers, and ten of these have now appeared, dealing with the Ditchling, Swansea, Rushall, Cuckfield and Chesham churches and sundry ancient trusts and charities. The latest publication, the tenth in the series (July 1990), is of more than passing interest. It is a transcription of the Church Book of the Paul's Alley General Baptist church in the Barbican from 1739 to its merger with Glasshouse Yard in 1768. This church later removed to Worship Street, recovered its evangelicalism, and eventually moved again to Winchmore Hill. The story of Paul's Alley was told by Whitley in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* Vol.4 (1914-15), and its mid-eighteenth century church book, while lacking the colourful episodes and human interest of the Chesham General Baptist Book (Baptist Historical Society 1985) is a significant contribution to Baptist historical studies. The quality of the printing is excellent, there is a useful introduction, plus a comprehensive index, and the whole is a tribute to the editor's skill and dedication. More Occasional Papers are promised, including, it is hoped, the earlier church book of Paul's Alley which runs from 1695 to 1738.

IAN SELLERS

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**Alan P. F. Sell**, *Church Planting: A Study of Westmorland Nonconformity*, H. E. Walter, Worthing 1986, ISBN 0 85479 074 8, xiii + 172pp. Available from Word Books of Bletchley. pb £7.50

**Patricia L. Bell**, *Belief in Bedfordshire*, Belfry Press, Bedford 1986, ISBN 0 9511595 0 X, 189pp. pb £6 (or £7 inc. from author, Flat 3, 20 St Andrew's Road, Bedford, MK40 2LJ

Both books survey religious development of various kinds county-wide. Sell traces the origins and development of the different branches of nonconformity, including Methodism, in a county whose geography kept it in relative isolation and presented its own challenge to the spread of the gospel. This detailed study needs a knowledge of the county for full appreciation but the joys and struggles of the people come through in lively quotations. Westmorland was an early stronghold of the Quakers, and this impeded the progress of Old Dissent, although these isolated communities were fertile ground for a variety of sects. Evidence of Baptist activity is scarce. A Baptist meeting was established in Brough in 1806, but no records survive. In 1827 a Baptist Chapel was opened in Middleton in Teesdale, thanks to James Goodburn, a blacksmith, and his friends from Hamsterley. This church helped the Brough Baptists, who in turn set up new preaching stations, but the county has never been strong in Baptist witness. The interest of this book lies essentially in the business of church planting. Sell suggests that today, when church planting is on the agenda of many Christians, the study of successes and failures in the field, whether prompted by ejection, secession, or deliberate mission, will have wider than antiquarian interest. Line drawings of chapels by the author's wife enhance the text.

*Belief in Bedfordshire* is written by one of the County Record Office staff, who has spread her net of belief wide, from those of the Celts, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxons, leaving their mark in place names and ancient monuments, through the medieval church to the wide range of religious beliefs, predominantly Christian, of later centuries. In Bedfordshire the history of Baptists and Congregationalists runs close together with many, like Bunyan, reluctant to draw hard lines around believer's baptism. Bell likens these independent churches to a strawberry plant, putting out tentacles that gradually take root. She seems to think a single Baptist body divided later into General and Particular, but the local development is clear enough. The opportunities these chapels gave poor members for social and intellectual development are illustrated with extracts from the manuscript autobiography of Sir Herbert Janes. A wide range of beliefs and periods are covered in this readable little book, yet it still allows people from the past to speak in their own words.

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**Philip S. Bagwell**, *Outcast London: A Christian Response*, Epworth 1987, ISBN 0 7162 0435 5, 174pp, £9-50

The story of the West London Mission of the Methodist Church 1887-1987, from *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* to *Faith in the City*, covering the Forward Movement, the development of the Mission, the Sisters of the People, the social work and open air witness before, between and after the two world wars, will interest and challenge all concerned to relate the gospel to contemporary social society. The author's sometimes lets his personal regard for Lord Soper divert him from the main story and one senses that he is better informed on contemporary social and political history than on the work of other churches, but it is a good story of personal salvation and social redemption going hand in hand.

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