

- 114 Vol.5.41.
 115 *ibid.*
 116 *ibid.*
 117 *SBYB* 1980, p.97.
 118 The secretary was Charles Gellaity. See *SBYB* 1980, p.91, and footnote 63 of this article.
- 119 Vol.5.19.
 120 Vol.5.20-1.
 121 The present writer is still technically a member of the Fraternal as he lives in West Lothian and spoke recently on 'Trinitarian Theology', January 1998.

KENNETH B.E. ROXBURGH *Principal, Scottish Baptist College, Glasgow*

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A.R. Wilson, *The History of the Christadelphians, 1864-1885: The Emergence of a Denomination*, Shalom Publications, PO Box H223, Australia Square, NSW 2000, Australia, or from 80-82 Apedale Road, Bignall End, Stoke on Trent ST7 8PH, 594pp. £48-95.

The line which divides sect from denomination is not always easily defined. Whereas Bryan Wilson's various publications helpfully introduce the sectarian, the classic definition of denomination remains that of H.R. Niebuhr. The history of Christadelphianism is plotted against these two markers, not only in the period here discussed but in its subsequent development in the twentieth century. Its origins were within the Campbellite tradition, itself an offshoot of the Scotch Baptist lineage. Thus the Churches of Christ, Christadelphians and part of the British Baptist tradition all share some common heritage.

The shaping influences in early Christadelphianism were John Thomas MD, who came to have violent arguments with Alexander Campbell, and Robert Roberts. Together Thomas and Roberts provide the distinctives to early Christadelphian thought, here clearly and fully analysed. Almost a third of the book is given to appendices which reproduce many of the sources and illustrate Christadelphianism's own self-perceptions in these early years. Indeed, the account makes for interesting comparison both with other ecclesiastical programmes seeking to recover Christian primitivism, as also mainstream protestant denominations in the UK and USA sharing similar origins.

The interweaving nature of the story is nowhere better seen than in the career of J.W. Thirtle, who appears first as editor (or sub-editor) of the *Staffordshire Sentinel*. Thirtle early came to be regarded as a Christadelphian of superior intellect; this first led to respect but later to controversy, especially that over Inspiration. Dr Thirtle later became, in Wilson's words, 'part of an evangelical No-man's Land between Christadelphians, Baptists and Evangelical Anglicans'. No-man's land or not, Thirtle served as Treasurer of the Baptist Historical Society from 1911-21 and as late as 1927 is shown as a committee member, actively engaged in the work of the Society. He is one of the few people to receive an obituary in this journal (1935, page 287), contributed by no less a person than Wheeler Robinson, who pays tribute both to his services to the Society and to his linguistic abilities. He concludes: 'His loyalty to the Gospel was associated with what is generally known as "fundamentalism", but this did not hinder him from hearty co-operation with men of a like loyalty who did not share his own ways of interpreting Scripture', applying to him also the tribute, 'his life was profoundly dominated by Christian verities, and he was peculiarly interested in Baptist history'. Sectarianism and denominationalism here live very close together.

M. Pearse, *The Great Restoration: the religious radicals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, Paternoster Press, 1997, xi + 320pp, £17.99.

Meic Pearse has written a survey characterized by lively prose and lucid analysis. His enthusiasm for his subject is evident on every page and is fully matched by depth of scholarship as he traces the genius of radical religious dissent chronologically from Europe through England to the American colonies of the seventeenth century. The tale is told with passion and clarity. One could recommend this book both to those arriving at the radicals for the first time and also for those wanting to have their memories refreshed and stimulated.

The author argues that the relationship of the various groups is not necessarily one of connectedness, thus sidestepping the question of a family tree of dissent. There is no 'radical equivalent of the apostolic succession', but a common vision to restore the practice of primitive Christianity as found in the New Testament. In the era of '*cuius region, eius religio*', that meant radicalism both in religion and politics, sectarians whose third way met persecution from Catholic and Reformed alike.

The radicals shared an experimental and evangelical faith. The scriptures lived for them and they identified closely with the early followers of Jesus, wanting to recreated the essence of New Testament churches in their communities. They were neither afraid to speak truth to power from outside the political *status quo* nor to opt out of state religion and all that it implied in terms of social harmony and stability - analysis that fits Anabaptists or Quakers better than New England Puritans perhaps. The willingness to gather, witness, and if necessary suffer for the right to worship and organize provided a defining experience in the struggle for the freedoms of modern democracy.

Dr Pearse's book is an enjoyable and readable tour through 'orthodox Biblical Christians, rationalists, mystics, apocalyptic visionaries and not a few downright cranks'. The narrative highlights the enigma of dissent - that it has often been at its most potent when exposed to persecution. Toleration not oppression was the enemy that sapped the will and dispersed the vision and the American experience was a signal example of what could happen if the outsiders became the establishment. This survey prompts again the question of to what degree radical dissenters, nonconformists or the free churches have been defined by the system they stood against (as their nomenclature suggests) rather than embodying the positive values they espouse. Any authentic Baptist identity in the future will surely have to meet this challenge.

STEPHEN COPSON