

ANGUS ACQUISITIONS 1999

Abingdon Baptist Church (Oxon, formerly Berks): additional church records 1831-1956

Aubrey, Revd Melbourn E. (General Secretary of the BUGBI 1925-1951 and President 1950-51): papers and photographs [received among the research papers of the late Revd Dr W.M.S. West]

Baptist Deaconess Movement (founded 1890, wound up 1992): minutes 1937-1992, photographs 1894-c.1964, and associated items

Baptist Union of Great Britain: minutes of main committees 1958-1994 (30 year closure operates)

Baptist Women's League: constitution, minutes and reports 1977-1989, and minutes of the Hertfordshire Federation of the BWL 1977-1989

Booth and Purchase families: probate papers, correspondence, etc. 1770-1880 (addition to existing holdings)

Burford Baptist Church (Oxon): minutes 1967-1989

Camberwell, Cottage Green Baptist Church (London): church minutes 1967-1985 and misc. papers 1881-1954

Davies, Revd Dr G. Henton (Old Testament scholar, President and Principal of Regent's Park College 1958-1973): correspondence, writings, photographs, articles

Haslingden Baptist Church (Lancs): church and Sunday school minutes and associated papers 1829-1909 [donated as part of the Revd G. Rusling's library]

Northern Baptist Association: minutes of North-Eastern Area 1915-1969 and Pastoral Committee 1960-1985

Shipton-under-Wychwood Baptist Church (Oxon): church minutes 1967-1989

Southern Baptist Association: minutes 1936-1982.

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REVIEWS

Derek Turner, *With Cheerful Zeal: a history of Dagnall Street Baptist Church, St Albans*, 1999, 141pp, £7.50 plus £0.50 p&p from Mr B. Branch, 14 Evans Grove, St. Albans, Herts AL4 9PJ.

Although the narrative ends in 1990, this book is an offering for the Millennium,

telling the life and times of one of our oldest English Baptist churches. Starting at Kensworth in the seventeenth century (the author is sceptical of claims of a 1600 foundation but wishes to see a Lollard connection), Derek Turner identifies twin imperatives from earliest days as 'evangelisation and care in the community, beginning with its concern for the poor' (p.117). The nineteenth-century story is one of village preaching stations and charitable initiatives. John Gill, nephew of Dr John Gill, and William Upton each served the church for almost half a century, and mark the change from High to an evangelical Calvinism that consolidated numerical growth and the church's standing in the community. In this century the church has been challenged to respond positively to changing needs in the church community, in ecumenical relations and in the city.

The book is well produced - except some chapter headings have slipped - with colour photographs on the cover and inside. There are a few typographical errors: Whitney for Whitley and Dr Williams' for Dr Williams's (p.5) and 1884 for 1684 (p.7). Generally the narrative is chronological with one or two excursions on specific areas of church life - worship and buildings for example. Little gems abound: in 1833 women were allowed to make nominations to the diaconate but for men only; in the 1930s a form of catechumenate was introduced for young people preparatory to church membership; William Vidler of Battle visited in 1791 to raise money for his new church building, by now close to his conversion to universalism; in 1960 Morris West advocated a system of 'evangelistic cells'. This is a good story well told and lovingly written, with occasional glimpses of the author breaking through the text. Sadly Derek Turner died shortly after publication but the church members can be assured that he has served them well with valuable insights into the past and an encouragement for the future.

STEPHEN COPSON

Lars Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1997, x + 214pp. ISBN 0-567-08589-9. £19-95.

In the last decade the study of baptism/Christian initiation has experienced a scholarly renaissance. Hartman's *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus'* is the re-working of a substantial and as yet unpublished contribution to the encyclopedic *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, supplemented by chapters on baptism in the *Didache* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*. Hartman sets out to examine 'a variety of modes of thinking about baptism, a variety which in some cases was wider than was acceptable to some New Testament authors'. But in saying this he is not simply referring to, for example, the Corinthians' practice of a 'baptism for the dead' (1 Cor. 15.29), for he also believes that there were 'differences between the "orthodox" authors, e.g. between Paul and Luke' (p.163). However, Hartman identifies five 'primitive motifs' which he finds initially in Gal. 3.26-7 ('one of the oldest texts of the New Testament which deals with baptism', p.1) and which he traces throughout

the New Testament books and the *Didache* and *Hermas*: the relation to Christ, the eschatological perspective, the context of preaching aimed at conversion/repentance and faith, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Spirit (e.g. pp.1-3, 54-8). But while Hartman uses these primitive motifs as evidence of points of contact amongst divergent theologies of baptism, they can equally be interpreted as evidence that there was a single theology of baptism held by the New Testament writers and the churches. Given the near universal agreement that the New Testament has very little to say on baptism and that when mentioned it is within the context of the discussion of some other subject (hence its use within the context of, for instance, Pauline exhortation, e.g. Rom.6.1-14), the apparent (alleged) developments/divergences can be explained as different emphases adopted by the authors relevant to the circumstances of a particular New Testament book and the situation of the church(es) for which it was written. To this can be added Hartman's recognition (p.1) that baptism was taken as a given by the writers, who assumed that their readers would be familiar with it and drew on this common experience and theology to exhort them.

It is also widely held that the New Testament did not know any unbaptized believers. The conservative nature of religious tradition in the first century, at the very least, raises the possibility that there was a unified understanding of baptism in the primitive Church. It would appear, then, that there is as much justification to argue that there exists within the New Testament a single, coherent and discernible theology and practice of baptism than there is to argue the opposite view. Tensions will naturally exist in any 'theology' (singular) of baptism precisely because of the 'occasional' nature of all New Testament references to baptism, but this is *not* the same thing as there being multiple baptismal theologies in the New Testament.

While there is little by way of discussion of the background and antecedents of baptism, the book's strengths lie in its exegetical depth and thoroughness; it will stimulate further studies in this subject.

ANTHONY R. CROSS *Roehampton Institute London*

Douglas C. Sparkes, *Autumn Gold: The Story of the Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Society*, 33 pages, £1-00. Available from Revd Paul Henstock, 359 Stroud Road, Tuffley, Gloucester GL4 0HB.

This little book, well researched by Douglas Sparkes, tells the story of the events that led to the setting up of the Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Society in 1975 and of its first twenty-five years activity. It includes a number of appreciations from those who have benefited from this service. The Society has grown and by the end of 1998 managed 163 properties. The Society would not pretend that the problem of retired ministers' housing has been solved, but the care and attention of the various officers over the years has ensured that a good start has been made. The book is really a challenge to the denomination to continue and increase the work of

the Society and Douglas is to be congratulated on its production.

THORNTON ELWYN

CHAPEL HISTORIES

Stephen Bunker, *Seize the Day: A Bicentenary History of Amptill Baptist Church*, Amptill Baptist Church, 1997, 92pp. ISBN 0 9531181 0 X. £3-95 + p&p from Miss B. Farn, 40 Verne Drive, Amptill, Beds, MK45 2PS.

P. Price and M.M. Thomas, *From Dun's Shut to Claremont Street 1620-1995: A Brief Survey of the Baptist Work and Witness in Shrewsbury during Three Hundred and Seventy Five Years*, 1995, 22pp.

Amptill Baptist Church, Bedfordshire (known as Amptill Union Church until 1981), is fortunate to have as a member a professional historian, Dr Stephen Bunker. He faced a difficult task when writing the history as there is an almost complete lack of records for the period 1882-1921 and the Church Book for 1967-1978 is also missing. So, instead of telling the story chronologically, he has adopted a thematic approach which enables him to highlight the changing rhythms of church life in the context of the wider developments in Christianity within modern British history as a whole. He has made use of the oral testimony of members as well as a collection of newspaper cuttings made by Arthur Peer who wrote an earlier history of the church published in 1963. Information about refurbishment and re-building of the chapel built in 1822 is relegated to an Appendix, which also includes information about the acquisition of the church's manse. Another Appendix gives biographical information about the ministers, apart from the current minister, the Revd Stephen Plummer. Interestingly, Wyndham Colin Bryan served as pastor from 1911 to 1913 and his son, Arthur K. Bryan, who was brought up at Amptill, served as pastor from 1950 to 1956. As a comprehensive list of members does not exist until the mid-1980s, the author has compiled a list of individuals clearly identified with the cause at Amptill until around 1950.

From Dun's Shut to Claremont Street was first published in 1970 to mark the 'three hundred and fiftieth church anniversary' of Claremont Street Baptist Church, Shrewsbury. It was written by 'M.M.T.', now identified as Miss M.M. Thomas. She saw no reason to doubt the tradition that the church was founded in 1620. However, this tradition must be considered suspect. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century it was claimed that the church was founded in 1627 rather than 1620, while Owen and Blakewell, in their *A History of Shrewsbury* (1825), thought that the only reliable tradition was that there were Baptists in the town during the Commonwealth period. The church met probably at first in Dun's Shut and then in various other buildings until a meeting-house was erected in 1780 in Dog Lane (now Claremont Street). By 1793 the congregation had declined but a young medical student, John Palmer, began to preach there and agreed to undertake pastoral oversight of the congregation for twelve months. At his request the existing church was dissolved and a new church

was formed in 1794 with a Calvinistic Declaration of Faith. At the end of his year's probation, he accepted the unanimous invitation to the pastorate, although he was allowed to go to London for a time to continue his medical studies. During his pastorate the church entered on a new period of prosperity. His ministry resulted in the formation of other Particular Baptist churches in Shropshire, at Oswestry (1806), Wellington (1807), Whitchurch (1808), Ludlow (1812), Wem (1814), Minsterley (1817), Rolla[w] (1819), and in Montgomeryshire at Welshpool (Y Trallwng) in 1820. An indefatigable evangelist, he preached as far away as Aberystwyth, where he baptized converts in the River Rheidol. In addition to the places mentioned by Miss Thomas, Palmer was responsible for reviving the Baptist cause at Wrexham (Wreccsam) in Denbighshire and beginning work at Llandrinio, Montgomeryshire. During the nineteenth century the Baptist cause at Shrewsbury weakened and the churches at Saint John's Hill and at Wyle Cop merged with the church at Claremont Street. However, the twentieth century saw the opening of a Mission on the housing estate of Crowmoor and in 1967 an assistant pastor was appointed to work there.

Miss Thomas's text has been republished without any alteration but a second part, written by Miss P. Price, covers the period from 1970 to 1995. In 1976 the Crowmoor Mission became independent and Claremont's assistant pastor, Mr Ron Lycett, became the first pastor of the new church.

The Claremont Church was a founder member of the Shropshire Baptist Association (not Shropshire and Cheshire Baptist Association, as stated by Miss Price). Although the Baptist church at Chester joined the Association in 1815, it is doubtful whether the Association was ever known as 'Shropshire and Cheshire'. The earliest existing Minute Book of the Association, which dates from 1818, refers to it as the Shropshire Association. If the church history is reprinted, it is to be hoped that this error can be corrected.

MICHAEL J. COLLIS *Minister of Sarn Baptist Church, near Newtown (Y Drenewydd), Powys*

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Following the review of G.T. Streater's *Memorials of the Independent Chapel at Rothwell* (BQ XXXVII, April 1997) the present minister of the United Reformed Church in Rothwell, the Revd Timothy Royds, writes that during his ministry the church has installed a baptistery so that baptism may be administered to believers by total immersion, making this a real option in accordance with the URC's 'twin-track' policy on baptism.