REVIEWS

E. Kaye, *For the work of ministry: a history of Northern College and its predecessors*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1999, xvi + 284pp, n.p.

This is the story of the URC college in Manchester. Elaine Kaye follows back the streams that combined to form it to their sources in the flowering of regional nonconformity in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the West of England, Lancashire and Yorkshire, spanning Independent churches to United Reformed Church. There was a strong regional link between churches and colleges, sometimes reflected in generous lay benefactors, although this produced an over-capacity in training and often colleges teetered on the brink of financial collapse, leading to a series of closures and amalgamations. Generally adopting a formal academic syllabus, the aim of the colleges was to provide a supply of educated men for Independent churches. Did this approach adequately prepare them for ministry? The significance of theological education opportunities in Scotland underlines that this is also a British story. Women students were first admitted in the mid-'20s in the United Colleges in Lancashire and Yorkshire - followed by a twenty-year break before more were admitted. Periodic approaches were made to the Baptist colleges of Rawdon and Bristol about joint courses or even a nonconformist training facility, although this approach would not fully bear fruit until the latter end of the twentieth century at Manchester. Clyde Binfield comments in his foreword that this is an important book. The nineteenth century was a period when a distinctive culture shared by men born, educated and ministering within the churches of Nonconformity exercised an influence on the aspects of social, cultural and political development in England in ways beyond the confines of the gathered church. It was a culture among cultures. The steady erosion and marginalization of this ethos belongs equally to the strands of English and nonconformist history in the twentieth century. Dr Kaye's book is well written and meticulously detailed, and includes an appendix of all college staff who taught arts and theological subjects.

STEPHEN COPSON

Rosemary Kaye, *Chapels in Essex: Chapels and Meeting Houses in the County of Essex, including Outer London*, Chellow Dean Press 1999, ISBN 0 9537549 0 1. 72pp, 8 plates, many illus. Profits to the Historic Chapels Trust, 29 Thurloe Street, London SW7 21Q.

Nonconformists are often aware when they pass an unknown chapel that subtle indications enable them to sense from a distance whether it is Baptist, URC, Methodist or whatever and to give it a rough date. To have these nuances and developments in style spelt out and illustrated is satisfying. For early dissenters acoustics were important, decor was not, but often their buildings had a simple beauty of their own. The nineteenth century produced some imposing Classical and

Gothic buildings. Sometimes unconscious trends are perceptively noted, like the Art Nouveau touches of Frinton Free and Victoria Road, Chelmsford. There is a fascinating chapter on foundation stones, a rich source of information to the connoisseur. Detailed lists of chapels, with dates, are an incentive to exploration.

DOREEN ACTON

E. Dakin, *A Short History of Wem Baptist Church 1815-1997*, Wem Baptist Church, Shropshire, 1997, 43 pp.

Wem Baptist Church is one of the Shropshire churches which owes its origin to the preaching of Dr John Palmer, the minister of Claremont Baptist Church, Shrewsbury. The church played an active part in the life of the Shropshire Baptist Association and later the Shropshire District of the West Midland Baptist Association. To mark the church's purchase in 1998 of the former United Reformed Church buildings in Chapel Street, E. Dakin has written a new history of Wem Baptist Church. Although the first chapter covers the same ground as the earlier history written by A. de M. Chesterman (1965), anyone interested in the earlier history of the church will still need to read the earlier publication. Dakin describes how the church became increasingly disaffected with the Baptist Union's stance on the ecumenical movement. The church discussed the Report, *Baptists and Unity*, but was unable to accept the Report's 'implications'. In 1968 the Revd Derrick J. Iles of Ludlow Baptist Church was called to the pastorate and he made it clear that he had reservations about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as he said it was based on universalism and baptismal regeneration. As a result, the church decided not to take part in this Week of Prayer but participated instead in the Week of Prayer organized by the Evangelical Alliance. Iles resigned from the Wem and District Council of Churches and the church itself withdrew from membership in 1970 when the Roman Catholic Church joined. Mr Iles was succeeded in the pastorate in 1974 by the Revd C.D. Jones, an accredited minister of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) and so the church ceased to be eligible for a Home Mission Fund grant. The church rejected the *Ten Propositions on Christian Unity* (1976) and then in 1988 the Swanwick Conference Report, *Not Strangers but Pilgrims*. In 1989, after a full discussion with representatives of both the Baptist Union and the West Midland Association, the church withdrew from both the Union and the Association and is now in membership with the FIEC.

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